LOVAT

DICKSON'S

MAGAZINE

Volume 3

1934

KRAUS REPRINT CORPORATION
New York
1967

Printed in U.S.A.

LOVAT DICKSON'S MAGAZINE

DEVOTED SOLELY TO THE SHORT STORY

VOLUME 3 JULY, 1934 NUMBER 1

R. Ellis Roberts	**FICTION AND THE SHORT STORY**	1
Helen Simpson	**A POSTERIORI**	11
Adam de Hegedus	**THE GOLDEN COCK**	20
Neil Bell	**SOVVY'S BABE**	32
Will R. Bird	**THE EQUIVALENT**	42
A. Calder-Marshall	**MY BROTHER AND I**	59
Francis Watson	**NEWS FROM RUSSIA**	65
K. Swinstead-Smith	**"THE MARCHESA"**	80
Struthers Burt	**ENTERTAINING THE ISLANDERS**	99
	OUR CONTRIBUTORS	124

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

Editor: P. GILCHRIST THOMPSON *Assistant Editor:* MAURICE E. FRY

The Editor will be glad to consider stories offered for publication and will endeavour to return unsuitable MSS. when they are accompanied by a stamped envelope. Neither the acceptance of and payment for a contribution, nor the sending of a proof, can be regarded as a guarantee of publication.

Editorial, Advertising and General Business Offices: 38 Bedford Street, Strand, London, W.C.2. Annual subscription, inland or abroad, twelve shillings, post paid.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/lovat-dicksons-magazine_1934-07_3_1

R. ELLIS ROBERTS

Fiction and the Short Story

"If you have a story to write, it does not matter how it is written": that, in spite of the modern insistence on one or other of the fashionable techniques, is a proposition I should be prepared to defend. It can, of course, only be defended if one takes its separate implications carefully. First, the author must have a story: and a story needs more than atmosphere, more than competence in style, more than wit, or observation, or humour, or pathos, or horror. It must have people: people known, or invented, or imagined. Then it must be the author's story. That is, the author, even if he takes an old legend, must establish his own relationship to what he has to tell us. Otherwise he will not rise above the level of the anecdote. Somehow, by direct statement, or implication, or even suppression, his personality must colour the story. What a great difference is made to the story by the author's character was shown, a year or two ago, in the volume edited by Mr. John Fothergill, where a number of authors, given the same people and the same situation, wrote their own stories on this set theme. Lastly, it must be a story to write: that is, it must be subjected to

that peculiar process of selection, composition and presentation which is to the art of literature what canvas or panel, and frame and hanging are to the art of painting. It is not enough to have a good story and to want to tell it: the author must be ready to submit to the peculiar discipline of fiction.

So my apparently lawless law could be reduced to these three propositions.

There must be a story.

The story must be the author's.

The story must be written.

In far too many of the modern short stories which I read, whether English or American, the last rule is the only one observed. Never has there been a time when nearly all the short stories, above the level of prolonged commercial anecdotes, have been so well written; and rarely, I think, has there been a time when so many excellently written stories are null, partly because of the author's refusal or inability to make the story his own, or to remember that you can have no story without characters. I do not mean that the characters need be sharply individualised: if the world which they are to occupy is a world of fantasy or of imagination the characters need not, should not, have the detailed characteristics proper to the people in a story where the atmosphere is one of fact, and only its implications are imaginative. There is nothing unreal in Edgar Allan Poe's characters; and there is a reality passing the truth of experience and sensuous observation in the characters of Walter de la Mare. But you cannot make great short stories with stock figures, though the wires on which they dance, and the strings by which they hang (or are hanged) are of the best Bloomsbury or Montparnasse material. What is fatal to the short story, as to all the other arts, is the thesis; and here a rebellious or

anarchistic thesis is every whit as dangerous as a traditional one. (Only a narrow line separates some modern stories by Soviet authors from *Jessica's First Prayer* or *Froggie's Little Brother*.) The artist must first have his own world, and people to inhabit it: you can borrow anything except those two essentials.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling, Mr. H. G. Wells, Mr. de la Mare, Miss Ethel Colburn Mayne, Mr. W. W. Jacobs, Mr. P. G. Wodehouse—these among the older authors—Mr. Coppard, Mr. H. E. Bates, Miss Mary Butts, Mr. Metcalf, Mr. Higgins, Miss Norah Hoult, Mr. Beachcroft—among the younger—are as different as possible in their aims and their achievements; but alike in this. Each has his own world, and each knows, and can let us know, who live there. To-day, with society so violently divided into sectional interests and separate, apparently conflicting claims, the writer of fiction cannot, as did the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century authors, assume the existence of one world with which his readers will be acquainted: he has to make his world. This is one of the tasks which is not so imperative for other than English or American writers. In countries where the national culture is still, at any rate hypothetically, nation-wide, such as France, Italy or Spain, the writer of fiction can take his world more for granted. Pirandello, writing of Sicilian peasants, can rely on the understanding and the sympathy of readers in Rome or Florence: he does not have to explain what is still in the blood of his readers. Here, where South Kensington does not know how West Kensington lives, and where neither has heard of Notting Hill, the story-teller's task is harder. So a great deal of English fiction fails through the author's wrong emphasis on social qualities; for instance, even so great a story-teller as D. H. Lawrence comes often to violent catastrophe because, having evolved his own peculiar atmo-

sphere, he fails entirely, through a wrong emphasis or a lack of proportion, to put the right people in that world of ardent and angry imagination. He will suddenly stage for some secular and bloody feud people who, from his own account of them, have no idea of any sport more violent than putting on a miniature golf-course on a County Council green.

There must, that is, be a real correspondence between the author's world and the author's people—or else tragedy will scream away into melodrama, and comedy decline helplessly into farce. Melodrama and farce can both be good things; but they should be deliberately undertaken, not merely allowed to intrude. Here, I think, is one of the greatest weaknesses of some of our short-story writers. Uncertain as they are of their borrowed world—borrowed, say, from Henry James through Katherine Mansfield—they are still more uncertain of its inhabitants and its customs. They have not the energy or the art to make a new world, or a new thing of an old world—as do Mr. Kipling, Mr. de la Mare and Mr. Jacobs—and they do not understand properly the confines and the habits of the world into which, in admiring discipleship, they have crashed. Not understanding this, they can still less contrive to occupy the world successfully with characters that have its freedom by natural right. They know little except how to fit their skeleton keys into the gates of a world made by other and great artists; and once the wards are forced, and they are within those enchanted grounds, they are hopelessly lost, and meet no one, unless it be the ghosts of the original makers' men and women.

I know it can be said that this criticism of mine amounts to little more than a restatement of the fact that there are fashions in literature; and that at the moment the fashion, at least for the more ambitious story-writers, is to follow James, Tchehov, Katherine Mansfield rather than Maupas-

sant and Kipling. I think the accusation is rather graver than that. My complaint is that, under the pressure of the modern insistence on technique, the emphasis has got misplaced. When the French naturalists began to improve the craft of fiction, their hope was to enhance the art of the novel and the short story; and this was still the hope of Tchehov. The story mattered most: to-day, with the decline of interest in essay-writing, the short story tends to take the essay's place as the final resource of the young author who knows that he wants to write, but has little idea of what to write about or how. He is taught how; but he is not taught, it would seem, that the "what about" is the most important. I would not say that a short story could not be written about no thing—Ethel Colburn Mayne and Katherine Mansfield have almost done it once or twice—but it must be about no thing viewed positively: you cannot make a short story about the absence of anything—unless indeed it were a new detective story where the author admitted he had no idea who killed the man in the coal-cellar. No technical skill will atone for the absence of a story or the absence of people; and some modern short stories have no more claim to be put in the category to which they profess to belong than have Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* or Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*.

Some who practise, and a few who defend the kind of story which is thus barred from the proper privilege of fiction, insist that the story of pure subjective impressionism is a necessary revolt against the story of pure plot, the story which still shows its inheritance from the anecdote. I have a great respect for the story with a plot; though I am willing to admit that some of the greatest stories in the world place the smallest reliance on plot. I suspect, however, this defence of the pure expressionist story. It has, I think, been put

forward by those who have not enough skill to lift the anecdote on to the level of the short story. There are some famous short stories where this raising is only just accomplished. Not only in old collections, such as the *Decameron*, but in authors as modern as Maupassant or Kipling. Perhaps the best instance is a story once very well known, by a minor American author, Frank R. Stockton: the story called *The Lady or the Tiger?* It is a story of a man condemned to the arena who, as he stands in the circus, knows that the gate of the wild-beasts' cage will open; but does not know whether there will emerge the woman whom he loves or the tiger. It is not a great story: it is very nearly an anecdote; but Stockton rises to the level of the short story by a certain humour in his characterisation, and by his definite, if slight evocation of an invented world. We are interested in the persons and their fate as well as in the point—left in suspense. The modern short story, in reaction from the slickness and neatness of the old-fashioned tale, has a tendency to lapse into misdirected essays: there is nothing *to* them—as stories. They are incurably self-centred: the world in them is not observed, nor invented, nor imagined; not the result of vision or of dream; it is a world of self-analytic meditation.

Having found your story which may, if you like, be scarcely more than a situation, as in Miss Mayne's *The Kingfisher*, or Katherine Mansfield's *The Fly*, or Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, you must have people—and people who properly belong to it. Here, as I have said, many modern authors, with consummate skill in producing their story, fail lamentably. There is, of course, a story to be made of a bull in a china-shop—what else is Jane Austen's story of Mrs. Elton?—but the author must know that it is a bull, and is in a china-shop. It is no use dolling up your bull to look like Lowestoft ware, or pretending not to notice that it is horning the place

to smithereens. In the anthology, edited by Whit Burnett and Martha Foley, of stories from an enterprising American magazine I found far too many examples of good stories ruined by inappropriate characters—characters who behaved not as they would, nor even as the authors would want them to, but as they, the authors, might. The sophistication of the story was ruined by the simplicity of the characters, as if some one were to people a tale of William Faulkner's with persons out of Eden Phillpotts. Too many of the stories, in short, were written by people who had studied Kaye Boyle, or Dorothy Edwards, or Joan Rhys, and hadn't noticed that these authors take great pains to fit their people to their world. The failure to do this is as disastrous as if a real mongoose were introduced into the famous anecdote of the man with a carpet-bag on the top of a 'bus. Perhaps it is not too well known to repeat. A man on the top of a 'bus found himself sitting next one who had a carpet-bag on his knees. The bag moved; and the man said to its owner, "I see you've got something alive in the bag. A kitten?" "No—it isn't a kitten—it's a mongoose." "Really! That's a curious animal to have on a Victoria 'bus. Is it a pet?" "No, it isn't a pet. . . . You see, I've been drinking too heavily these past weeks. I keep seeing snakes of a night. And I heard a mongoose killed snakes like winking. So I'm taking this little fellow home with me to-night. He'll deal with 'em." "But—excuse me—I'm very sorry for you: but you know the snakes you see—they're not *real* snakes." "Ah," replied the man with the carpet-bag, "nor is this a real mongoose."

These two main faults of some modern writers—failure to have a story and failure to create characters who belong to that story and its world—are not only found in short stories: but they are more fatal to the short story than to the novel.

For a simple reason.

Many elaborate distinctions have been made between the short story and the novel: rules have been drawn up as applicable to the one and not to the other—very good rules, though a genius—Tolstoy, for instance—often ignores them. The one essential difference is so simple that it, and its implications, are frequently forgotten. The short story is shorter than the novel. Fortunately, there are no standard lengths for either. The short story can be a few hundred words long, or run to 20,000 words or more; the novel may be 60,000 or half a million. The comparative brevity of the short story imposes, even on those who are not apparently conscious of the compulsion, certain obligations on its writer —of difference in opening, of difference in composition, in lighting and in the use, or non-use, of the curtain. One result of its brevity is invariable. A writer of short stories cannot afford to take the liberties which some novelists can.

If a novelist starts off with no story, and with a vague idea of the relation between his characters, and the world he is putting them in, and the story which must be their expression, he will, as he goes on, be bound to rectify his earlier inattention to these essentials. A capital instance of this is to be found in that great picaresque novel, *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club*. We know that, when Charles Dickens began to write that immortal text for mortal illustrations, he did not know what he was going to do with his characters. He had little plan of the world which they were to inhabit, little idea of the story they were to enact. As he wrote his monthly parts the world, the story and the characters all came alive; and the result has, rightly to my mind, been found worthy of mention by Mr. Arthur Machen (in his neglected masterpiece *Hieroglyphics*) as of the same kind as the *Odyssey*. Again, had he been writing a short story, the caprice of Laurence Sterne

might never have flowered into the characters and the incidents of *Tristram Shandy*: we should have had an anecdote or two and some brilliant essays.

Now, what the novelist can do, the writer of short stories cannot—for the simple reason that he has not the space. After a false start he cannot pick himself up and recover: you cannot win in the hundred yards or the hurdles if you follow a technique which may get you home in the three-miles.

Do I then advocate writing short stories to a formula? Would I have the moderns follow O. Henry, or Maupassant, or Mr. Kipling? I trust that I have made my own admiration clear enough, by the authors I have mentioned, to leave that question unanswered. I would, however, suggest that the rejection of a formula can be as limiting in its consequences as any formula ever was. And I do believe that young, comparatively inexperienced authors will go less astray, if they follow some formula, than if they insist on the delight and dangers of licence. The problem is parallel to that which confronts the modern poet. Dull as purely traditional verse can be when written by third- or fourth-rate authors, the boredom consequent upon it is nothing to the boredom which results from poetry written in diligent imitation of poetry deliberately "free." There is something curiously disheartening in bondage to freedom.

I think it would be a good thing if some of the younger authors of to-day—men and women with plenty of talent and some ideas—studied, say, the work of Mr. Rudyard Kipling and Mr. H. G. Wells: such study might end in the discovery that discipline may be natural and free, and that, in a story apparently formal and traditional, the over-tones can supply the same imaginative vision as is conveyed by work where that vision is more obviously the author's aim. A great man—how true this is of Tolstoy, of Turgenev, or Mau-

passant—by saying all that he means can say more, too, just as well as some authors can say more than they mean by saying less. It depends on where you put the point of departure. The point of departure in a story is reached when the reader who is sympathetic and intelligent accompanies the author into the world of the story as the author sees it. Thus to persuade another to go with one, to abandon his own interests (or find them enhanced), is one of the artist's greatest privileges and hardest tasks. The artist who achieves this does, for the moment, makes his world more real for us than any other, so that, as we put his book down, we return unwillingly, incredulously, to the inferior vitality of actual things. Some authors, supremely good, put the point of departure before the beginning of the story : others, such as those I have just named, put it more commonly in the story : sometimes the complete story is the point of departure, and the reader only realises, at the end, what world he has visited and what vision has been offered for his acceptance.

HELEN SIMPSON

A *Posteriori*

At about one o'clock on the last night of her stay in Pontdidier-les-Dames Miss Charters was awakened by indeterminate noises sounding almost in her room, and a medley of feet and voices in the street. It was not the first time this had happened. Pontdidier had belied the promise, made by an archdeacon, that she would find it an harbour of calm. The fact was, the town was too near a frontier, and too unsophisticated. When politicians in Paris, to distract attention from their own misdeeds, began to roar of treason, Pontdidier believed them, and the Town Council—" nos édiles "—set up a hue and cry for spies. Miss Charters had not failed to observe this nervousness, and to despise it a little, without ill-humour; but to be roused by other people's unfounded terrors at one in the morning was a little too much, and she said so, in her firm French, to the landlady as she paid her bill next day.

" Je ne suis pas sure que je puis vous recommander à mes amis. Votre ville n'est pas tranquille du tout."

The landlady sank her head between her shoulders, then raised and swung it deplorably to and fro.

" Las' naight," said the landlady, practising English, which

reckoned as a commercial asset, "it is a man escape from the police. A spy that makes photographies. They attrape him, but the photographies—gone! Nobody know."

"Un espion!" repeated Miss Charters coldly, as one who had heard that tale before. "Esperons qu'il n'échappera pas."

With that she walked upstairs to her room for a final inspection. Her hot-water bottle, as usual, had been forgotten in the deeps of the bed, and this she rescued thankfully. Going to the washstand to empty it, she set her foot on some round object, and came to the floor with no inconsiderable bump. The object, obeying the impetus she had given, rolled to rest against a chair-leg, and Miss Charters, turning to eye it with the natural resentment of one tricked by the inanimate, instantly recognised it as a spool of film.

Her mind, with a gibbon-like agility which unhappily never comes at call, leapt from the spool to the noises in the night; linked these with her own wide-open window, probably the only one in the entire façade of the hotel; and came to the conclusion that this spool had reached her floor by the hand of the suspected spy now in custody; flung as he fled. But there had been, her subconscious seemed to think, two noises in the room. She looked for another possible missile, and perceived, under the bed, a flat wallet of some kind. It was quite inaccessible, the bed's frame hung low, she had no umbrella to rake for it, and some vague memory of criminal procedure insisted that the police must always have first cut at a clue. It was her duty to go downstairs, display to the landlady the spool, which she had picked up instinctively, and ask that the authorities should be informed.

She set foot on the stairs, and even as she did so, halted.

It became apparent that she would have to give her evidence in person, swear to the noise in the night, to the morning's discovery. This would involve missing her train, and its subsequent connection, with the expense of warning domestics and relatives by telegram. More sinister considerations succeeded these. The French were hysterical. They were spy-conscious. They would refuse to believe that she and the fleeing man were strangers. As an excuse for open windows a plea of fresh air would not satisfy.

Halting on the stairs, she rehearsed these reasons for holding her tongue, and came to the conclusion that silence, with a subsequent letter from England, would meet the case. To roll the spool under the bed till it lay by the wallet, and so depart, would be the dignified and comparatively honest course of action. But the turmoil of the morning had let loose in Miss Charters' mind hordes of revolutionary desires, which now found a rallying ground in the fact that she had not, in her forty-odd years, had one single unusual experience. She had never held unquestioned sway as chief talker at any party; she had never come within hail of being the heroine of any incident more lively than the spoiling of a Guide picnic by rain. The spool of film, now safe in her bag, tempted her; to take it home as proof of the adventure, to hand it over in the end, perhaps, to somebody from the Foreign Office or Scotland Yard! She hesitated, and the revolutionaries in that instant had her conscience down. No word of any discovery found its way into her farewells.

At the station she became aware of two things. First, that she had twenty minutes to wait for her train; second, that amid the excitements of the morning she had omitted a visit to that retreat which old-fashioned foreign hotels leave innominate, indicating it only by two zeros on the door. She cast a prudish but searching eye about her. The word

"Dames" beckoned; Miss Charters bought a newspaper and, apparently purposeless, drifted towards it.

The usual uncleanness greeted her, and to protect herself from unspeakable contacts Miss Charters sacrificed a whole sheet of her newspaper. It was newly printed, the ink had a bloom to it. Miss Charters, accustomed at home to entrust to newspaper the defence of musquash against moth, vaguely supposed that it might prove, on this analogy, deterrent to germs. She emerged without delay, glanced to see that her baggage was safe, and paced up and down reading what remained of *Le Petit Journal*. There were fifteen minutes still to wait.

Seven or eight of these had passed in the atmosphere of unhurried makeshift that pervades all minor French stations, when a commotion was heard outside, chattering of motor cycles and shouting. Through the door marked "Sortie" three policemen in khaki and kepis made a spectacular entrance, followed by a miraculous crowd apparently started up from the paving-stones. The three advanced upon Miss Charters, innocently staring, and required her, none too civilly, to accompany them.

"Pourquoi?" she inquired without heat. "Je vais manquer mon train."

They insisted, not politely; and their explanations, half inarticulate, contained a repetition of the word "portefeuille." At once Miss Charters understood; the wallet had been found. (Who would have thought the French swept so promptly under beds?) She must give her account of the whole matter, miss her connection, telegraph her relations. Bells and signals announced the train to be nearly due; with a brief click of the tongue she summoned resolution for a last attempt at escape.

"Je suis anglaise," she announced. "Mon passeport est en ordre. Voulez vous voir?"

She opened her bag, and immediately, with a swift fatal motion, made to shut it. On top, surmounting the handkerchief, the eau-de-Cologne, the passport, lay the damning red spool, so hurriedly, so madly crammed in. The foremost policeman saw it as soon as she did. He gave a " Ha ! " of triumph, and caught the bag away from her. His two companions fell in at her side, the crowd murmured and eddied like a stream swollen by flood. As she was marched from the station, out of the corner of an eye she saw the train come in; and as they entered the Grande Rue she heard the chuff and chug of its departure. Hope gone, she could give undivided attention to her plight.

It became evident, from the manner of the policemen, and from the fact that she was taken to the Hôtel de Ville, that matters were serious. She made one attempt to get her bag; certain necessary words lacked in the formula of defence she was composing, and the bag contained a pocket dictionary. Her request was denied. A cynical-looking man at a large desk—mayor ? magistrate ?—fanned away her protests with both hands and listened to the policeman. So did Miss Charters, and was able to gather from his evidence that the wallet found in her room contained papers and calculations to do with the aerodrome near by. Could anything be more unlucky ? The one genuine spy that had ever frequented Pontdidier-les-Dames must needs throw his ill-gotten information into her bedroom !

The functionary asked at last what she had to say. She replied with the truth; and despite a vocabulary eked out with " vous savez " told her story well. The functionary noted her explanation without comment, and having done so asked the inevitable, the unanswerable questions.

" You found these objects at 10.45 this morning. Why did you not immediately inform the police ? You insist that

they have nothing to do with you. Yet you were actually attempting to carry out of this country one of the objects. How do you account for these facts ? "

Miss Charters accounted for them by a recital, perfectly true, of her desire to shine at tea-parties. It sounded odd as she told it; but she had some notion that the French were a nation of psychologists, also that, being foreign, they were gullible, and sympathetic to women in distress. The cynical man listened, and when her last appeal went down in a welter of failing syntax, considered a while, then spoke :

" I regret, mademoiselle. All this is not quite satisfactory. You must be searched."

The French she had learned at her governess' knee had not included the word he employed, and it was without any real understanding of his intention that she accompanied a woman in black, who suddenly appeared at her side, looking scimitars. They progressed together, a policeman at the other elbow, to a small room smelling of mice. The policeman shut the door on them; the woman in black ejaculated a brief command; and Miss Charters, horrified, found that she was expected to strip.

In her early youth Miss Charters' most favoured day-dream had included a full-dress martyrdom, painful but effective, with subsequent conversions. She now learned that it is easier to endure pain than indignity, and amid all the throbbing which apprehension and shame had set up in her temples, one thought lorded it : the recollection that she had not, in view of the dirty train journey, put on clean underclothes that morning.

The woman in black lifted her hands from her hips as if to help with the disrobing; there was a shuffle outside the door as though the policeman might be turning to come in. With a slight scream, at speed, Miss Charters began to

unbutton, unhook, unlace her various garments; as they dropped, the woman in black explored them knowingly, with fingers active as those of a tricoteuse. At last Miss Charters stood revealed, conscious of innocence, but finding it a poor defence, and ready to exchange the lightest of consciences for the lightest of summer vests.

The woman in black was thorough. She held stockings up to the light, pinched corsets; at last, satisfied, she cast an eye over the shrinking person of Miss Charters, twirling her slowly about. Now the words of dismissal should have come. Instead, at her back Miss Charters heard a gasp. There was an instant's silence; then the one word, ominous: "Enfin!"

The woman in black ran to the door and shouted through it. Miss Charters heard excitement in the policeman's answering voice, and his boots clattered off down the corridor, running. Her imagination strove, and was bested. Why? What? The woman in black, with a grin lineally descended from '93, informed her.

"And now, my beauty, we'll see what the pretty message is that's written on mademoiselle's sit-upon!"

The next few moments were nightmare at its height, when the sleeper knows his dream for what it is, knows he must escape from it, and still must abide the capricious hour of waking. An assistant in blue was vouchsafed to the woman in black. One deciphered such letters as were visible, the other took them down, pesting against the artfulness of spies who printed their messages backwards. In deference to Miss Charters' age and passport some decency was observed. Policemen waited outside the half-open door; there was much noise, but no threatening. The women heard her explanation (conjectural) of their discovery without conviction and did not even trouble to write it down.

At last the message was transcribed. The woman in blue compassionately gave Miss Charters back her clothes, a gesture countered by the woman in black, who refused to allow her to sit down lest the precious impression be blurred. With a policeman at her elbow and the two searchers at her back, her cheek-bones pink, and beset by a feeling that this pinkness ran through to her skeleton, Miss Charters once more faced the functionary across his table. The transcription was handed to him. He considered it, first through a magnifying glass, then with the aid of a mirror. The policeman, the two searchers, craned forward to know the fate of France, thus by a freak of Fortune thrust into their hands :

" Et maintenant," they read in capital letters, " j'ai du cœur au travail, grâce aux PILULES PINK."

The functionary's eyes appeared to project. He stared at Miss Charters, at the searchers; with a start, at his own daily paper lying folded, with his gloves upon it. He tore it open, seeking. Page 7 rewarded him. " Maladies de Femmes," said the headline; underneath, the very words that had been deciphered with such pains, accompanying an illustration of a cheerful young woman, whose outline appeared in transfer not unlike the map of a town. Silently he compared; his glass was busy. At last he looked up, and Miss Charters, meeting his eye, perceived something like comprehension in his glance, a kind of gloating, a difficult withholding of laughter—" Rabelaisian " was the word which shot across her mind like a falling star. It was a hard glance to face, but all Englishness and spunk had not been slain in Miss Charters by the indignities chance had obliged her to suffer. She had one magnificent last word :

" Je rapporterai le W.C. de la gare aux autorités sanitaires ! "

It was the best she could do. The larger threat which at

first inflamed her mind, of complaints to the Ambassador in Paris, of redress and public apologies, would not do; both she and the Rabelaisian eye knew why. She could never, to any person, at any time, confide the truth of an experience so appalling. So far as vicarage conversation went, the thing was out of the question. Hateful irony! Something, after forty-odd years, had happened to her, and it had happened in such a manner that mere decency must strike her mute. In the words of a ceremony she had often in younger days read over fondly, she must hereafter for ever hold her peace.

Miss Charters held it. The relations who welcomed her a day later were of opinion that her holiday in France had not done her much good. They found her quiet, and discovered that what she wanted was to be taken out of herself. So they arranged little gaieties, at which Miss Charters listened silently, now and then pinching in her lips, to travellers' tales of those who had been seeing life in London and by the sea.

"But then," as a relative remarked, "poor Aggie never did have much to say for herself."

ADAM MARTIN DE HEGEDUS

The Golden Cock

Had there been in England a society with an aim similar to the Royal Commission for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments, to take care of the living relics of the glorious past, the lanky figure of Sir Peter Maron would have surely been registered among ex-cricketers, sporting earls and pre-war generals. But, as we all know, regrettably enough, in Great Britain interest in human beings comes a long way after the interest in houses where eminent men of letters were born, or lived and died, in village commons, ancient bridges and "Our Dumb Friends." Consequently Maron was so to speak only unofficially recognised.

People were wrong about him in more than one way. For one thing, they regarded him as a steady old man. In reality he was neither steady nor old. He was about forty-five years of age, but collectors and misanthropes grow old sooner than people who do not collect and tolerate their fellow men's existence. (These are facts which had obviously escaped the attention of those who compile statistics of expectation for the insurance companies.) And Peter Maron was a collector and a misanthrope. Also he had a beard,

and the remains of his hair were of that particular colour which the French call " pepper and salt " and the English only associate with the colour of gentlemen's trousers in Victorian fiction.

Moreover, his great-grandfather's name was by no means Maron. Peter's envelopes, it is true, bore a crest of a chestnut tree, calling to mind the fact that chestnut is called *marron* in French, whereupon people spoke of him, in the same breath with the pillars of Norwich Cathedral, as an example of the durability of the Norman strain. In reality his great-grandfather was born in Cologne as Moritz Aron. He came over to London to become a moneylender, under the name of Maurice Aron. Later on he became M. Aron, and finally Maron, and a supporter of the Church of England. His son was made a baronet. But all these things were not generally known, which only reminds us of what a brilliant writer said about historians: " they have familiarised us with the truth that the past is the proper field for the imagination."

From time to time gossip-writers, when there were no fashionable weddings, or receptions at embassies, and no great ladies were lending their houses for charity exhibitions, dragged him out and featured him as " *one of the old world.*" Of this Maron knew nothing, as he read no papers except *The Times*, and then he only looked at the paragraphs on the auctions at Christie's.

Who's Who informed its readers that he was *third baronet, unmarried, heir none*, and that his sole address was *Wigmore House, Cavendish Square, W.* This informative volume did not disclose the facts that he was an M.A. (*Oxon*), that he published a book (*Grinling Gibbons*, 176 *pp. Privately Printed, London* 1910) and that his club was *Collectors.*

The Collectors' Club is in Hill Street, and that was the

only institution on whose books his name was still registered. In the course of years he had left every other club he had belonged to. It was not because he found that the society was more select at the Collectors' than at the other clubs. It was well known that the Collectors' was not select at all. Select society begins with people who have given up the idea of collecting. But Peter Maron disliked society good as well as bad; there is really no difference between good society and bad from the point of view of a misanthrope. And the club had real advantages. He really felt he benefited by his membership. His fellow members would take him in the " misty directions of London " to houses where one could not see through the windows for the dust on the panes and the premises had the melancholy smell of yesterday's steak-and-kidney pie. Sometimes he found valuable things in these places—a piece of China, a dirty Gobelin about which the small local dealer knew nothing. He would only say "*absolutely guaranteed antique, sir,*" with the fixation of a drunkard, and ask him a price, which was usually the half that of a St. James's Street dealer. He had bought the Limoges enamel salt-cellar to which the one in Hertford House could not hold a candle, and the letter casket of shagreen which looked as if it had once preserved the intrigues of a Swedish Court, in dirty little shops like this. But, most important of all, he had also found the golden cock in this way. The Golden Cock! The object of Maron's greatest pride. Whenever he thought of it he felt the joy of a street urchin who has found half a crown on the kerb. According to the description, it was made of silver richly gilt and ornamented with precious stones. It was probably French, alike for the workmanship and for its symbol. A Gallic Cock. The man who sold it said that there was a story about it. There was some old

clockwork inside the bird which made it crow, but it had been out of order for some time. It was said to have belonged to an old Savoyan family, and, very thrilling, it was supposed to have crowed once when a member of the family committed some act of treachery. Peter bought the cock together with its stones, the dead machinery inside and the romantic story, for a hundred and fifty guineas. In his article "Eighteenth-century Goldsmith's Craft in France," which appeared in *The Burlington Magazine*, Mr. David Compton devoted a whole page to the bird, and recounted the story. There was also an article by a Frenchman about it. (*Roger Laterrasse : "La collection de sir Pierre Maron, Le Connoisseur," p.* 136, *Paris, février* 1920.) In both cases the periodicals published the photograph of the cock with the due acknowledgment "*By courtesy of Sir P. Maron, Bart.*" He did not mind this, though he was aware that nowadays a number of the new rich buy objects of art, of which they have no knowledge, simply to lend them to exhibitions, and so glory in the reputation of connoisseurs.

Sir Peter, returning now from one of his tours around the antique shops in St. James's Street, watched two arguing sparrows on the bronze shoulders of Lord George Bentinck, then walked the few remaining yards back to his house. He opened the enormous mahogany door with a tiny key, entered and put down his cigar in the hall. As he took his master's hat and gloves, the butler said :

"There's a gentleman waiting for you, sir."

Maron looked at the man in astonishment. He had had few visitors for the last ten years, most of them against his will, and he had given orders not to allow anybody into the house in his absence. He spent a fortune on insurance, and was constantly in terror of being robbed of the small valuables, the miniatures, the China and, of course, the cock.

A treasure worth a house, that would fit into an overcoat pocket, could easily be removed from any of the rooms. Too worried to think of giving the butler notice for his disobedience, or even of reprimanding him, he was about to hurry to his study at once to catch the adventurer red-handed, but, before he could make a step, the man said :

" It is Mr. Nazareth."

His excitement suddenly changed to a feeling of shyness. Nazareth ! That long-forgotten name, that long-forgotten man, came to his mind as suddenly as when the rain recalls to life from an old garment a drop of scent believed lost for ever. It comes out in its stale variation, bringing memories of a dead past, no longer exciting. It does not now send the blood to our cheeks, but it gives us a feeling which we have not had for a long time, and which we have now outgrown, and think sentimental. He felt shy, as we all do when, unexpectedly, we have to face a friend whom we have not seen for a decade. We know that he must have changed, and try not to show our embarrassment at the fact that he is no longer the person we fixed in our mind, once, at a certain point of his existence. Our friend probably registers the same feeling, but, in our anxious endeavour to conceal the truth, we seem to forget about his feelings. To meet Nazareth now was, for him, like being reminded of an act of childhood, the memory of which brought him shame. He was angry with his butler.

Nazareth had been his tutor and his hero at Oxford. He had been such an enthusiastic follower of Nazareth, that to think of those years now often seemed crazy and ridiculous to him. He had at the time accepted Nazareth's theories blindly without wholly understanding them, although he felt that they were admirable : a feeling a young musician might have when he hears César Franck for the first time.

He had quarrels in plenty with his friends on Nazareth's account. That was the beginning of his misanthropy. Nazareth—Peter felt—had liked him, but had not thought much of his loyalty to principles. When he had made a rash statement or exaggerated, Nazareth would always give him a special and particular smile, reminiscent of photographs of early leaders of the Labour Party. It was a polite, old-world expression of doubt. He used to caress his soft, dark, chestnut beard and look long into the face of his disciple. It was an old-fashioned look, too. Possibly pre-Raphaelite.

When he entered the room, Nazareth, who was gazing at the mantelpiece, lifted his eyes for a moment and turned towards the door through which Sir Peter came. He rose.

"I think he has grown since I saw him last," thought Peter. "He looks so tall. It is true I have not seen him for a long time."

Nazareth's face remained calm and wise, only his look grew a little grave.

It took Peter three long minutes to become sociable. It was an effort, as if an old cricketer tried to bowl again after twenty years of rest. The first sentences of Nazareth passed unnoticed, while Peter was occupied in brushing up his forgotten sociability. He could not make out why Nazareth had visited him after all this time. What could be his motive? He was still respectably dressed in the sort of uniform that dons, officers of the British Museum and lecturers on religious subjects at the Y.M.C.A. wear, but the thought nevertheless crept into his mind that Nazareth might be badly off, he might have lost his job and—nothing was unlikely in these days.

His words appeared to support this theory. He seemed to be merely making conversation as he told him how he

had wanted to see Peter for many years, that he never saw him any more at the old familiar places, where they had once been *habitués* together, that he had wanted to see how he was getting on, that he was interested in his mental evolution. He was afraid that Nazareth would talk of their common reminiscences, of his essays and his early work, which now seemed stupid and immature to him.

" I had never even had a line from you all these years," said Nazareth.

Peter looked at the floor, so that the man, who knew him and could read his face, should not guess his thoughts. Nazareth's appearance and the whole conversation seemed pure nineteenth-century to him. It was extremely romantic, like a Rossetti picture or some lines of Tennyson—" The Lady of Shalott " possibly. His sense of style—one of the things which had stayed with Peter all his life—suddenly mastered him. He felt that he must continue the conversation in the same key, use the same vocabulary and even the same mannerisms as his visitor.

" Everything changes so quickly nowadays," he said. " Man, in particular. The world has changed all through its existence, through the centuries, but no generation ever witnessed such quick changes as ours. Men from one day to another from good friends become mortal enemies. But not only men change. The whole order of things alters at a tremendous pace : religion, politics, science "—and income-tax—he thought, but did not add it, as it would have been out of tune. " Only one thing remains unalterable, and that is our love of beautiful things. Puritans may say that all beauty passes. When I hear such talk I can't help thinking of the Salvation Army. Of course, they are quite right in one sense, because it is true that in different ages people have had different ideals of beauty. The ideals may change :

our forefathers were enthusiastic about Romney, and their sons admired Turner. Enthusiasm remains, and will remain for ever, no matter whether the object of adoration is a picture by Bellini or by Cézanne. Our adoration is exactly the same as our father's. It is something constant and solid, on which we can base our life. Our standards of politics, religion and society alter. They become worn-out clothes and worn-out principles."

The man smiled again, and Peter remembered that smile as people remember an old house, or the way a familiar person walks. And with that smile the Oxford memories—not particularly interesting or dear—came back to him. It was a smile like the bells on a puppet at a pickpocket-academy responding to the touch of clumsy fingers. Nazareth always smiled in that way when his disciple had said something foolish or lost his sense of proportion, and that smile hurt Peter more than any words could have hurt him. There was a faint air of irony in it. (An Oriental smile it was.) Suddenly the master said, as if the idea had just entered his head:

"Yes, Peter, if you still remember my words, I saw this. I know my people very well—especially those with whom I spent as long a time as I did with you. Do you remember when I said then that there would be at least three such questions in which you would deny my ideas? You were so hurt when I said that, you should remember."

(I am going to hear a sermon about man sticking to his principles. Consistency! Only the ox is consistent.)

". . . I remember those days at Oxford, when you did not seem to be interested in anything but my teaching. There were eleven others in the class, but you it was who believed most firmly in my ideas. And, in spite of your enthusiasm, I knew that some day even you would desert me."

(Melodrama, pure and simple.)

" I knew very well that my words could never take root in you. Never was I able to bridge that wide gap between us. And you felt it. You felt that I was a Socialist by necessity, by birth, by inheritance—in a way I was a Socialist, because my father was a carpenter with several children, and, according to your ideas, only the son of a baronet, like you, could be a philanthropist and a real Socialist. And I was not a Socialist like the ranters of to-day. I never wore a red tie, and rarely attended meetings of the Fabian Society. I pleaded for love, and, if I spoke about equality, it was a social equality at most. . . ."

" Equality, social equality," broke out Peter, as if inspired.

" Men can never stand on the same level in real life. The years have made me wise, if we can call age wisdom. . . . I must confess that I am disillusioned as a consequence of the ideas I adapted so passionately at that time. Tell me, why should I give my money to the degenerate little brats of alcoholic millhands, why should I contribute to the corruption of the English working-classes to help them to immorality and laziness, simply because politicians outbid each other in bribing the electorate to help them to power with promises cutting into our flesh? Why should I shut up my country house or sell it, so that dirty little lunatics can have a good time on my money? And why should I help idiots to fill Hyde Park with boys and girls with ugly voices and dirty hands who expose their rickety bones on the banks of the Serpentine? And why should I be charitable when the Government takes all it can from me just the same? No. No charity, no philanthropy for me. The survival of the fittest, yes. . . ."

There was a short silence, in which one could hear the ticking of many an old clock. There was no co-operation

among the clocks, no team-spirit; it was as though they all belonged to different political parties. Sir Peter had grown accustomed to their differences.

"And religion?" asked Nazareth suddenly. Then he looked as if he repented the question so swiftly and so loosely put.

"Religion," said Peter, looking at the old Flemish confessional, the carving of which cast such fantastic shadows on the gobelins on the wall. "Religion alters too. Of course you will say that it always existed, and always will exist. Yes, but there has never been a uniform religion among mankind, and I seriously doubt if there will ever be, even in those remote ages which you and I shall never live to see. Religion is based on morals, and, as we were taught, each nation adapts its particular moral standards; consequently it has to adapt, or has to be nearer to one particular religion than the rest. . . . As for my religion, it is the love of beauty. You might call it adoration of idols. May be. But my Gods are in this room and in the rest of the house."

Nazareth nodded, and thought of the Fragonards in the other room, which depicted gallant scenes from the epoch of gallantry. Were they his Gods? he mused—and so Peter had forsaken him on this question too. He rose and stood by the fireplace as though he thought it not worth while to pace the room. In the centre of the mantelpiece stood, elegantly, his shining feathers a mass of precious stones, the cock—the golden cock. Nazareth did not even look at it. There was an old Italian suit of armour in the corner: a banner with a cross on it in its hand. He looked at it for a moment, then suddenly said:

"And what about patriotism, Peter? You wrote such a marvellous essay on it. I have still got it somewhere among my papers."

"Tear it up, please," exclaimed Peter—"tear it up; the sooner the better." He was excited. "Patriotism is the greatest contradiction to any of the things we spoke of just now—to charity, to religion, and so on. It brings out empty national traditions which lead to destruction. Narrow-minded nationalism is the mother of war. There must be peace, and it will only come if it is a universal peace for humanity. People must be linked together by common, not national bonds. That is something which we cannot live to see either. I saw what patriotism is, during the war. Never in this tired age will people build anything with lines like those of the Clothier's Hall at Ypres. The Germans ruined it. It is still in ruins. Countless masterpieces were destroyed in the same way. That was the result of patriotic fervour and nationalism. And what happens to art after the war? What happened to our art?"

The man still leant on the mantelpiece.

"Were you in the war, Peter?"

Maron shook his head.

"I was a conscientious objector."

The man's face became dark and full of sorrow, uncertain shadows played around his mouth like the reflection of terrible bodily pain.

"I was," he said at last. "I am much older than you are, and yet I went. I did not go to fight, but I went as an ambulance man, to help the sufferers, in a way to fight for the idea you deny. I had no weapon in my hands, and I lifted them up to show they were empty. Look"—he raised both his hands. In the centre of his palms there were dark red wounds. "And look, on my forehead are still the marks of the thorns—of the thorns of barbed wire."

His palms were still open, as he held them out before him for a moment. Then they dropped suddenly, and in their

fall they struck the marble of the mantelpiece. The golden cock trembled at the blow. Its gold and turquoise tail started to shake.

The master looked at Peter:

"In short, I was right. . . ."

Peter did not answer. He was looking at the bird anxiously, for it was moving now. The shock seemed to have awakened the old machinery, long thought dead. Not only its tail, but the wings too and the head were moving. It trembled as if it had been stirred and excited, as if it was angry; as if, like the dying, it was trying to throw out a final confession. Then a strange mechanical voice, like that of a worn-out gramophone, came from the metal throat.

A crow. The cock crowed——

NEIL BELL

Sovvy's Babe

Sovvy Bartle was a lout—a hulking, black-browed, morose, shiftless lout. At ten years of age he was cock of the walk at the village school; at thirteen, standing five feet ten inches, and scaling somewhere round about one hundred and fourteen pounds, he had punched the jaw of the schoolmaster and bidden his last farewell to discipline.

During the next few years Sovvy's loutishness grew to full flower in the little cottage where he lived with his mother and father down by Bender's Reach. How he made a living no one knew, and certainly old Reuben Bartle neither knew nor cared. And just as certainly Sovvy always had money to rattle in his pockets of nights at "The Peacock." Not that it was much of a mystery: living's not too hard for a man with a gun and a clever dog, and Sovvy's mongrel Bob had brains enough for the whole village.

But when Sovvy was getting near twenty old Reuben's health began to break up; and then he took to drink. It was father following son, for Sovvy had soaked since he was fourteen or so, and could carry a barrel with little more than a lurch or a hiccup, while Reuben had never been much for liquor.

And then, most nights for near a year, the little cottage down at Bender's Reach was about as near hell as makes no difference. A proper hell it must have been to old Ann Bartle. There was such a terrible shindy at the cottage one winter night that Policeman Scaife had gone in. Old Reuben was sitting on the floor grinning drunkenly, and with blood dripping from a smashed lip; Sovvy was leaning against the table drinking bottled beer and screaming with laughter; the lamp, smoking and flaring, rocked dangerously on the shaking table; and in one corner, huddling into a shawl, all grey-white and scared like a mouse, and crying softly like a frightened kid, was old Ann.

But luck was with her, and she died before the spring came. And then the cottage became the sort of place that makes evil tales as common as muck. Sovvy hated the old man and Reuben hated him. It was only at nights when the drink was running in their veins that they spoke to each other; and their speaking came to no more than filth before the fighting began. For all his sixty years old Reuben was as strong as a bull, as broad as Sovvy, and topping him by a couple of inches. But he couldn't carry his drink like Sovvy, and it was when the liquor began to fuddle him that Sovvy took his chance and laid him out.

How Sovvy got away with it when the old man died, or was killed, whichever way you like to look at it, was a wonder. If it hadn't been for Lizzie Sawyer's evidence Sovvy would surely 've done a stretch in Shadstowe Jail—or his neck 've done one at Caerlow County. Lizzie was a poor sort of little thing. Old; well, she wasn't old, not more than five-and-thirty then, but she had a sort of white, sucked-dry, patient look that made her any age. She lived alone in a cottage about a furlong from Bender's Reach; she'd a bit of money, just about enough to live on if one didn't eat too rich and

gathered wood for the fire and wasn't above an odd job or two.

Lizzie had been coming in to do for Sovvy and the old man since Ann died and she was there for some reason or other on the night it happened. And it must 've been past eleven.

It was a foul night, snowing thickly, and blowing over the sea from the north-east enough to freeze the dead.

And in the morning old Reuben was battered and stiff outside the cottage; and Sovvy, with a split lip, a gash over one eye, and his ear bitten and torn, had been taken away to Shadstowe by Policeman Scaife.

But Sovvy got away with it, and it was Lizzie's evidence that saved his gruel. Old Dr. Blount gave evidence first, but his evidence was neither one thing downright nor another. Reuben's death, he said, might 've been caused by the battering he'd had, or the exposure, or his heart. And when the Coroner put a bit of a short question, Dr. Blount said, well, yes, he should say so, he'd not much doubt that it was the exposure. And yes, the battering might have rendered Reuben unconscious, and of course then he must have been *put* outside.

Sovvy went into the witness-box with a swagger and a scowl at the folks present. And when the Coroner warned him, he gave a jeering sort of a cough and said, " A-right, Doctor Stanton, I know all about it; there's no blood on my hands, not to speak of."

He hadn't much to say, but it was pretty thick what there was. " The old man called me a bastard," he said, " and not just for a name. He pointed his finger at me, shoved it into my face, and followed it up with a spit, ' You're no son of mine, you dirty lout; you're a bastard, see? A bastard. Your mother thought I didn't know, and I let her think it,

ay, years, but she knew I knew afore she died. She was a trollop, and you're just a dirty bastard, see?'

"And then I hit him in the mouth and he came at me laughing and screaming and caught me round the neck. And presently we were on the ground, and that's where he got his battering, most of it from the legs of the chairs and the table and the fender; and it's where I got my lot too. He'd 'a killed me if he could, and I'm not saying I wouldn't have killed him. But Lizzie Sawyer was shrieking by now more'n a screech-owl. It stopped us. I pulled myself away from the old man, and he rolled over and looked at her, and called to her to stop it for a bitch that she was. And then I got up, and presently the old man got up too. I sat down, but he went and stood over against the door. 'Bastard,' he said, 'bastard; I'm glad you're no son of mine. You've no guts. Twenty-one you are, eh? and I've gone sixty. I smashed *my* father up afore I was sixteen.'

"'You get out of here before I hurt you,' I said. 'I'm going, you dirty lout,' he said; 'I'm going, but I'm coming back in a while. And then we'll see.' And then he went out, and that's all there is to it."

And as Lizzie Sawyer said the same, that's all there *was* to it; and Sovvy, as I've said, got away with it. What we thought in the village here, why, we *thought*; but we weren't looking for a fight, and so thinking was as far as it went.

For the next three years Lizzie went round daily to Sovvy's cottage to tidy up and to cook for him an evening meal. Whether or no he ever paid her a penny piece no one knew. She looked in need of a good daily feed herself, but she never had a bite at Sovvy's; and many a night in the winter she'd no fire in her little place, while Sovvy's cottage was lit up with blazing logs. Sovvy never went out in the woods for firing, nor along the shore for wreckage, but he never lacked a fire.

And often enough Lizzie could be seen, late on a winter afternoon, going home up Marlock Hill all crouched and swaying under a great burden of bits of planking, sides of coops, and ends of barrels from the beaches. But it was her own business. Maybe it warmed her heart more than the fire did Sovvy's great body; for she had always been a poor, sucked-dry, white mouse of a thing, that no man'd ever looked on to want.

By the time Sovvy was twenty-five Lizzie had taken her few sticks down to the cottage at Bender's Reach and gone to house-keep for Sovvy for good and all. She sold her own little shack to Farmer Gray for sixty pounds, and Sovvy was roaring drunk every night for weeks afterwards.

And presently there began to be whisperings and talking in the village that Sovvy was beating her. She used to come down to Alderton's grocery store every Monday and Friday morning as sharp on eleven as Sovvy was to get into " The Peacock." She must have been near forty then, but it might have been fifty for the looks of her. Her hair, which was never any colour to speak of, was mostly white, she stooped a bit and walked shakily, and her sucked-dry, white mouse of a face seemed little younger'n Granny Peters's.

It was soon common enough to see her with a bruise about her eyes, or a cut over the lip; and Fred Bristow's wife said that once, when she put up a scraggy arm to point to something in Alderton's stores, and the shawl she always wore fell back from her wrist, there were great red finger-grips all along the soft white underside of her arm above the elbow.

But it was nobody's business and when some of the women went to Policeman Scaife's wife, to see if anything could be done, she told them, and rightly too, knowing the law as well as her husband, that as long as a woman bore it and said

nothing, 'twere no business of the law any more than it was of ours.

And then Lizzie got her reward, if you can call it a reward; maybe it was more than any reward she'd ever dreamed of. For Sovvy married her. Not at church, but anyway all right and square. We might have known nothing about it if Farmer Gray hadn't seen the notice posted outside the Register Office in Shadstowe.

But married they surely were. They went into Shadstowe one Thursday morning in September month on the old yellow bus. Sovvy had a new blue silk muffler on and had given his boots a lick in front; while Lizzie had on a flowered muslin thing of the sort that hadn't been seen in Trepenny since Granny Peters was a maid. Lizzie looked scared and whiter and more sucked-dry than ever when they set off. They didn't come back till the last bus, and it was then long after dark, and no one saw them get off at the lane-head that led down to Bender's Reach. But the next day was Friday and on the stroke of eleven Lizzie was down at Alderton's stores with her list and her string bag and her old leather purse. I was buying my week's plug at the time, and was waiting while old Alderton cut it up. Fred Bristow's wife was there and Charley Jarman's and Dick Bassett's sister; and they certainly had an eye-full of Lizzie. But it didn't want half an eye to see the change in her. She was still white and stooping and starved looking, but there was a look in her face like you may see on a bitch's when its master's fondling it. And her eyes might have been a young maid's at the fair, for the shyness and the brightness there was in them.

But it all made no difference to Sovvy. He spent as much time and money at "The Peacock" as before, no more maybe but no less. Maybe it *was* more, or else he began to carry his drink badly. He certainly was more quarrelsome at

closing time and fouler in his speech and louder in his singing when he went off up Marlock Hill each night on his way home.

And then in a while Lizzie came to her full flowering. She was going to have a babe. It was true enough, for Nurse Ansdell had been to see her. And very soon it didn't need Nurse Ansdell's word, for a blind man almost might have seen it when Lizzie came down to Alderton's. Proud of herself and happy; you'd not believe what it did for Lizzie. She plumped out in the face and got some red in her cheeks and that scared, sucked-dry look went altogether. And the eyes of her were more than I know how to say. Just in Alderton's stores, when she stood alone amongst the other women, with her list and her string bag and old purse, she was like a maid at her first dance; but when she came down into the village one Friday, and her time getting a bit near, hanging on Sovvy's arm, she looked up at him, half-dragging along as she was, for he never eased his strides, and Sovvy might have been Christ Himself and she the wanton woman at His feet. I heard some of the women talking about it afterward, and they don't mince their words hereabouts, although not given to swearing as they say townswomen are these days.

Well, the next thing we heard was that old Dr. Blount had been called in a hurry to see Lizzie and had bundled her off to Shadstowe Hospital. And there they'd cut the mite out of her dead, for it couldn't be born.

And Sovvy, in "The Peacock" that night, called her a lame cow and said that all women were cows these days and no good for giving a man a child or a bit of pleasure or anything else. And Fred Bristow leaned over the board and punched him in the mouth and was bashed pretty near senseless for his pains before we could get Sovvy off him.

Within a month Lizzie was back again in the little cottage at Bender's Reach. The doctors had made a pretty good job of her at the hospital, but they'd cut her about a deal, and she knew she could never have a babe any more, dead or alive.

She still came twice a week down to Alderton's stores. She wore no ring now, but what had come to it we never knew. She was a sick woman, sick in her body for all the doctors' cleverness, but sicker in her heart. It hurt you to look at her. The starved, sucked-dry face of her was like a dead woman's; it was worse than a dead woman's, for her eyes moved and stared, and the dead can't do that. How she held together God only knows, dragging herself back and forth to Bender's Reach twice a week as she did, any weather and all weathers. And all through the winter afternoons she was out in the woods, or along the shore, after firing. And many a late winter afternoon, about dark-fall, you'd see her going crouched and swaying up Marlock Hill, under a load of logs and stuff that a man 'd look twice at.

I suppose she'd be something a bit over fifty when a great trollop of a wench took over the ferry cottage, the boat, and the ferrying into the bargain. She was a fine enough wench to the thinking of many; a big, red-faced, ginger woman, no more than thirty, with round white arms and a thick white throat and a great gash of a scarlet mouth with moist soft lips—a proper come-hither baggage. Katie Byrne she called herself.

What she thought she was going to do at ferrying God only knows, but it didn't matter, for she hadn't been at the ferry cottage a week before Sovvy was doing the job for her. And within a month he was sleeping more nights at ferry cottage than he did up in his own place at Bender's Reach.

By Christmas Sovvy was living most of his time with Katie Byrne and only dropping in for a meal now and again

at his home. Of course Lizzie knew about it. Who didn't? Sovvy made no secret about it; why should he? He was proud of it; he was burning up for the red-haired baggage and she wanted him as much. Brazen about it? I don't know. It was naught to be brazen about; they were just taken like it; and they found it good and made the most of it.

One night in May month, a while after midnight, Sovvy came banging at Nurse Ansdell's door and roaring and bellowing like a bull in rut.

But when she came down, and asked Sovvy what he wanted, he only said, "You come along to Katie Byrne's; she's ill." And no more would he say, only adding, "She's a pain in her belly; eaten something bad, maybe."

Well, of course, Nurse Ansdell guessed what was up, and went off with him down to Ferry Cottage. But to her amazement, when she went in, Katie was sitting up in a chair with all her clothes on, groaning and crying and sipping a cup of hot tea.

"I'm poisoned, Nurse," she said. "I've eaten something."

"Don't talk like a fool," said Nurse Ansdell, "you know what's the matter with you; you're going to have a baby; now get to bed."

But Katie stuck it out that it was nothing of the sort, and that she'd poisoned herself, and wanted some good strong pills. And it wasn't till Nurse Ansdell threatened to go for Captain Brennan, who was the landlord of the cottage and a magistrate, that Katie consented to go to bed.

And before the morning broke she'd as fine a boy as you'd wish to see. She had it as easy as an apple dropping off a tree; and that afternoon she sat propped up in bed nursing the babe with Sovvy sitting beside her drinking bottled beer and the ferrying going to the devil for all he cared.

Within a week the babe was dead. Overlaid, Katie said;

and cried noisily enough. No one could prove anything; the babe was dead, suffocated; old Dr. Blount had given his certificate and Sovvy had been round to Padgett, the carpenter's, to get him to make a little coffin for it. "Cheap, mind you, and none of your stuffing," Sovvy had said sourly.

Padgett had finished the coffin, a poor enough plain little thing it was, and had pushed it to the end of the trestle-table in his shop.

The door opened and Lizzie came in. She took no notice of Padgett, but went over to the coffin and stood looking at it. She ran a finger round the inside. Then she came over to Padgett and said, "There's no white satin for the little babe to lay on."

"It won't run to that," replied Padgett.

She opened her purse and gave him all there was.

"Is that enough?" she asked.

Padgett ran his hand across his nose. "You put your money back," he said roughly. "I daresay it'll run to it after all."

Lizzie did not answer, but turning away went over to the little coffin again and put her worn hands inside it, stroking the wood. "Sovvy's babe," she said shakily; "Sovvy's babe; if on'y they'd 'a let me have him."

WILL R. BIRD

The Equivalent

PELEG FILLER was washing his breakfast dishes, and he disliked the task. The water was too hot for his fingers and he was awkward. It was Sunday morning, though, and he wanted to have things clean when Mary, his wife, came home.

Crash! A blue platter slipped from his grasp and was shattered on the floor. Peleg stood staring at the pieces, the weather-browned oval of his features elongated in amazement and despair. Mary had treasured the platter, and crockery was considered expensive in the remote port of Goose Tickle, Newfoundland.

There was a sound of heavy boots, and a dark form passed the window. Peleg drew his mouth together and opened the door.

"Mornin', Jake," he said dully. "I've dropped Mary's platter."

"One you give her for your weddin' present?" The newcomer was a broad-beamed, solid-looking individual with a brick-red, matter-of-fact countenance. "You shouldn't have tackled it."

"The water's too hot," said Peleg lamely. "I wanted to have the deck cleared for Mary. Her's comin' to-night."

"Yes," said Jake, "her's comin'. Peggy's up and around and the baby's fine. Her said for you to have supper made up." He grinned as if it were a huge joke, and seated himself comfortably. "I come up to sit a spell," he explained. "There's times when a man gits too much housin' with wimmen."

"Not for me," said Peleg stiffly. "I ain't never got enough of it."

"You'n Mary's diff'rent"—Jake was leisurely lighting his pipe—"and you ain't been hitched long."

"It'll be the same," returned Peleg defiantly, "when we have been. There ain't none like Mary up or down along."

Jake puffed slowly, as if meditating a comparison with Peggy, then shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"New married's like that," he pronounced. "You ain't been hitched long enough to—crackey!" Jake slapped a knee. "It's 'zactly a year come Sat'day since you went down to Gull Bay and got her from that old one. I writ that letter and put the 'Pro Tem' to it to make it look like you'd writ it, and you got her."

"That letter helped," agreed Peleg, "but I had to do my own courtin'. Mary weren't easy fetched." He didn't like reflections on his courtship or lack of education.

"You ought to be like Cap'n Swain," said Jake to change the subject. "He allus took his missus a special on their weddin' date. Called them 'versaries, and set a heap by it."

"They've got on good," said Peleg, fiercely eager to defend such tactics.

They sat a while in silence, only broken by the ticking of the alarm-clock on the shelf, then Jake shifted uneasily.

"How'll us settle?" he inquired. "Will us pay Mary or . . ."

"Sure thing," said Peleg sharply. "Her's earned it—

not but what her'd gone neighbourly jist the same. Settle it with her."

Again there was silence. Peleg gathered the broken crockery, regarding it ruefully, then turned to Jake.

"Then specials the cap'n give," he queried. "What was they?"

"Now that's more'n us kin say, right off." Jake seemed glad that Peleg was pleasant again. "It were wax flowers from St. John's one time, but I can't 'member others. I'll be up along Sat'day an' find out, if you'd like."

"Sat'day," said Peleg, "is the day you said. That'd be too late. I'm goin' down to Angel's Arm on Friday, an' I'll git it there at the company store."

"That's a wonnerful bit to go," observed Jake. "An' likely they has high prices. What you set on?"

"Nothin'—yet," returned Peleg cautiously. "Mebbe a blue dish would be good."

"It would be handy and providin' for Mary," said Jake, "an' that's sartin. But it's a longish way."

"It's a chance t' make a dollar," said Peleg. "I'm runnin' a load for Simon Beaker."

"Bigger chances not to make a dollar," warned Jake, knocking out his pipe. "You shouldn't do for him 'thout you have it writ an' signed, an' you can't do that."

"I knows him," said Peleg shortly.

When Jake departed, Peleg scanned the kitchen and front room. He wanted ideas about what thing would please Mary most, and there seemed nothing better than chinaware. It would be a pleasant surprise and, he told himself strongly, he'd always give Mary specials on their 'versaries. Peleg loved his soft-voiced, blue-eyed wife with a burning devotion. He wished he could get her something different, something

new to Goose Tickle; he wanted his wife outstanding in the village.

He gazed at the bright new wall-paper she had bought from St. John's with a mail-order system that he held in awe, at the fresh clean oilcloth on the table and shelves, the flowers she had thriving in boxes and tins, the rose-bush in a tub that she " wintered " in the kitchen. Mary had transformed his humble premises, and her loving, vivid presence seemed there with him in the room. Peleg thrilled, and made mighty resolutions about the special he would get.

Simon Beaker was a tricky fellow. He could read and write, and took every advantage of bargains the unlearned ones could not comprehend quickly. Peleg, however, trusted to the weight of his hard fists as arguments in his favour, and let Beaker know it.

He loaded his boat with 800 pounds of supplies for an isolated little post that missed the trading steamer.

" Watch for wettin'," cautioned Beaker. " Come there's any soaked, it's ten per cent. off'n each hundred you got."

" All right," said Peleg. " That's fair figgers."

He was not much alarmed about shipping water, and it would not cost him much if he did.

But the wind was against him and he laboured in rough seas at the entrance to the Arm, catching a ducking of spray. He had things well covered and protected, however, and was shortly at the wharf.

" I was feared of that," said Beaker. He was exhibiting a sack with a soaked appearance. " You shipped water on the turn."

Peleg stared at the piled goods and at the tarpaulin. He wished he had watched sharper as Beaker uncovered the load.

" Put in that shop's the bargain," said Beaker, and Peleg

had to carry the sacks and cases to the small wooden building.

When he had finished, Beaker was not around.

" Went up along to see somebody," explained the clerk in charge. " But he left your pay here."

Peleg picked up the money and counted. After deducting expenses, he had just fifty cents profit.

" Something," he rumbled threateningly, " is wrong with this."

The clerk asked questions, and figured.

" No, that's correct," he said kindly. " There's the weight just as I make it. But he's taken off ten per cent. for ' soaking.' That comes to three dollars and twenty cents."

" T'ree dollars ! " echoed Peleg bewilderedly. " T'ree ! Us figgered ten cents of eight would be eighty."

" Ten per cent. isn't ten cents." It took the clerk a long time to make it clear, but at last it was done, and Peleg, fifty cents in hand, waited grimly for Beaker's return. The wet sack, he found, was beans, and a small piece of ice still remained, melting, among them.

Beaker did not return. His errand carried him a safe distance from the wharf, and Peleg finally realised that in all probability the fellow would not cross his path again until autumn. He turned and gazed at the shelves of the small store. There wasn't decent crockery, even if he had money; there was nothing he wanted as a 'versary gift for Mary.

He went outside and stood, his slow mind struggling with his problem. A number of the men were gathered about a newcomer, a stranger, by his clothing, to either up or down along.

" Here you are, friend," said the stranger. " Get in on the raffle. Down at St. John's. Fair and square, and the

draw's Tuesday next. Just time to send in the stubs. Fifty cents 'll put you in line. Read the ticket; look it over."

Peleg looked. He did not want to let them suspect that he could not read.

"Fair enough, isn't it?" said the stranger quickly. "For the veterans, too, and a blind man makin' the draw. Fifty cents, friend. Every man here's bought one."

Peleg, reddening, tried to hand back the ticket, then saw the others exhibiting theirs.

"Help the boys, friend," persuaded the stranger. "Take a chance. Only fifty cents."

"Sure, Peleg," spoke up one of the men. "It's a good one."

Without another word Peleg drove a big hand in his pocket and extracted the lone coin that represented his profit for the day. He stuck it into the stranger's palm.

"What's your number?" The stranger peered. "Three sevens—lucky, sure. Now write your name here . . ."

But Peleg was striding away.

"I got no more time," he flung back, and heard the men giving his name and address.

It was not until he was seated at his supper table, with Mary pouring tea for him and his plate heaped with fried cod and potatoes, that Peleg could bring himself to speak of his fruitless venture.

"An' him puttin' ice into the beans to soak a wettin'!" he gritted at the finish. "Next time I catches him——"

"No, Peleg, no." Mary flung herself around the table and clasped her arms about his neck. "Don't ever. Say you won't."

Her firm, warm arms and quivering pleading choked Peleg.

"Sure, us won't if you don't want," he promised. "There, Mary, us said it. It were just because I got nothin' for you."

"For me, Peleg?" Mary stayed on his knee.

"Sure," said Peleg. "A special for your 'versary. Jake were tellin' me it's to-morrow."

"'Versary? Oh, when us were married! Don't mind nothin' for me, Peleg. It's so happy havin' you so good to me that it don't matter."

"Peggy settle with you?" Peleg tried to change the topic.

"No-o. Her hasn't any money, Peleg."

"No money! Jake said her had forty dollars saved from blueberryin'."

"Her did, but the doctor took every dollar an' said it should have been five more comin' so far. My, Peleg, will us have the money, come September?"

"Sure, us will." Peleg's heart gave an odd little jump. It was the exact thought that had been prodding at the back of his mind. "Us'll have to. Were the doctor fair-speakin'?"

"Wonnerful," said Mary wistfully. She twisted her apron in her fingers. "He said all about the hospital down at Pilley's Pond, said I should go there, Peleg—the first one anyhow. He said it were ten times better there—nurses, an' fetchin', an' lookin' after the baby proper, with feedin' an' all. I wish you could have heard all he said."

Peleg swallowed hard.

"How much is't?" he asked.

"Sixty dollars, board'n all."

"Sixty!" Peleg moistened his lips with his tongue.

"I dreamt it last night," said Mary more wistfully. "It were near like heaven. My, Peleg, a person 'd never forget a treat like that. It'd beat Christmas or anything I've ever knowed."

" Sure," agreed Peleg, " but sixty——"

" There, us were foolin'." Mary tried to smile quickly and to end the subject, but her face as she pictured herself at the hospital stamped itself on Peleg's memory and stayed there.

It was two days before Peleg got a chance to show Jake the ticket he had purchased.

" What," he queried, " does that read? Us give fifty cents for it."

" Fifty cents ! " parroted Jake. " What for ? "

" Us were tryin' to git a special for Mary," said Peleg patiently, " and there were nothin' to git. It's about stubs an' raffles, whatever them is."

Jake had been spelling slowly, and after a time he mastered the first lines.

" You'm got a ticket on a car raffle," he announced soberly, shaking his head. " Throwed money away, I'd say." Carefully he explained all details. " It's to be drawed in St. John's," he concluded.

" I know'd that," admitted Peleg. " But it must mean all Newfoun'lan', or how'd them others buy ? "

Jake did more head-shaking.

" It's drawed down there," he said. " You'm lost money."

" But what," urged Peleg, " is drawed ? "

Jake started and stared at him.

" You'm bought that," he asked in an awed voice, " 'thout knowin' what it were for ? "

" Sure," owned Peleg frankly. " Us thought it—it were somethin' for Mary."

" It's a car ! " said Jake, hoarsely dramatical.

" A car ! "

" A car. Us don't know what the name is, but it's like diff'rent engines for boats. It's a six—whatever that is."

Jake spat impatiently. "The 'scription," he snorted, "is all big words a lawyer couldn't 'splain." He gazed a while longer at the offending card, held it off between thumb and forefinger, then handed it back to Peleg. "Where," he quizzed drily, "would you run a car if you had one?"

Peleg looked around him helplessly. Up along stretched forbidding rocky coast with footpaths leading inland to scrubby forest areas. Down along reached the same hard-faced, forbidding aspect.

"I ain't got it," defended Peleg desperately, then his jaw set. "Don't you spread word about it," he warned. "Us told you, but don't let no more get it, not even Peggy."

And Jake, after a quick look at Peleg's expression, promised faithfully.

The storekeeper at Goose Tickle fingered an envelope with a strange crest and gazed at the group waiting for mail.

"Peleg," he called. "Here's one for you."

Peleg, startled, shambled forward and thrust it in his pocket as if it were something he expected. Then, with a casual remark about the fishing weather, he left the building, acutely aware of curious gazes.

Once away from scrutiny, he hurried to the far end of the settlement and caught Jake outside his house.

"Come out of sight of the window," he urged. "Us got somethin' to show."

Jake obediently led the way to his boat shed, and there whistled his astonishment as he scanned the outside of the unusual envelope. "V-e-t-e-r-a-n-s," he droned his spelling. "Vet'runs. That's the ones that was into the war. A-s-s-o-c-i. Thunder an' lightnin', I can't git them long words! Why do they put them . . ."

Peleg removed the envelope from his hands and ripped it

open. "Read quick," he commanded tensely. "Us wants to know what's in it."

"Dear Mister Peleg Filler," Jake began. "We are p-l-e-a-s, pleased, to a-d-v-i-s-e—that's advice or like it," Jake frowned, "that you have d-r-a-w, drawn, the l-u-c, lucky, t-i-c-k, ticket. This letter is to n-o-t-i-f-y, notify, you that we are a-w-a-i-t, awaiting, your i-n-s-t-r-u—I can't git that one." Jake was irritable as he laboured. "The son of a scaldy that writ this wants to show off his larnin'. Here's another right in the wash of it. R-e-g-a-r-d, that's regardin', s-h-i-p, shipment. We c-o-n-g-r-a-t . . . The whole part there's them long ones."

Peleg held his control. Jake had been useful to him on several occasions in his capacity as a reader, but it had always been in connection with letters and statements of simple spelling and few words. This crisp, crackly paper bore long, severe lines of black letters, and it was small wonder that Jake could not master them.

"Sit down," he advised, "an' go slow with it. Mebbe you kin catch the main drift of what they want."

"Want!" repeated Jake. "They don't want nothin'. They're tellin'——"

"They must have wanted somethin'," persisted Peleg, "to write a letter to me."

"They're tellin' you you got the car."

"Got the car!" Peleg collapsed on a bench.

"Sure. Didn't you hook that?" Jake was amazed. "That were the 'drawn the lucky ticket' part."

"The car!" groaned Peleg. "What'll us do?"

Jake sat and scratched his head. He thrust the letter between himself and the bench, felt for his pipe, found it and lighted it.

"It's a wonnerful hard one," he admitted after ponderous thinking. "If you could be at St. John's, mebbe you could sell her to somebody that had enough money."

There was no response.

"It'd have to be that," continued Jake. "You couldn't trust nobody that far. I don't know what them kind of cars cost, but likely they're more'n a couple of boats. It's yours anyhow, as it stands. By Crikey!" Jake almost dropped his pipe. He stood up and let the letter fall to the floor. "You're in bad, Peleg," he said huskily. "Peggy's cousin down there has one of them cars and he writ up about the cost of havin' it licensed—like a steamboat. You've got to take out the right papers or be lawed, an' them papers, Peleg, cost a heap. It's either twenty or thirty dollars Peggy's cousin paid."

Peleg stared dumbly at him, his misery riding high.

"If we had larnin'," Jake went on, "us could git up a letter to them an' mebbe git clear decks on how to do, but us can't." He searched for another match. "Best thing now," he said sympathetically, "is for you to go down yourself."

"Me?"

"Sure. You could do it in four days."

Peleg pulled down his cap.

"Us won't," he said doggedly. "Mary's not one to keep alone that long."

"Her could stay with Peggy." Jake was very suave.

A quick retort leaped to Peleg's lips, but was smothered.

"No," he said heavily. "Her's none too strong and I wants her restin'." He bent and picked up the letter. "Scan it ag'in, Jake," he implored. "Mebbe there's somethin' that could—could . . ."

Jake scanned, and after a long session of muttering and spelling, pointed a thick finger.

" That part there, the aft of it you might say, is a hard one, but it's got a place to sign. I wish it were plain readin'. If d-e-s-i-r-e-d, the e-q-u-i-v-a-l—that's too much for anybody," rasped Jake. " The parson hisself couldn't git that one. May be had in c-u-r-r-e-n-c-y. An' that's another. It don't make sense, but it sounds, if you'm try it, like words that gas-engine man up last spring were usin'."

He turned back again to the place, after lighting his pipe for the fourth time.

" For the e-q-u-i-v-a-l-e-n-t, sign here," he read. He passed over the letter. " Mebbe the storekeeper kin——"

" You knows I wouldn't go to him," broke in Peleg. He tore off a piece of the envelope. " Write that word on this," he begged. " Us kin show that to Mary, and perhaps her kin fathom it. Her's wonnerful smart on things."

" I've read her hand," said Jake. " It's like I do."

Peleg forebore comment, and watched as Jake produced a stubby lead pencil and with great care inscribed the letters. " Thanks," he said. " An' don't spread 'bout this."

Jake, smoking steadily, nodded, and stood in the doorway to watch him depart.

Peleg went in warily when he reached home. He managed to talk on village matters until Mary had poured his second cup of tea. Then he put the bit of paper on the table.

" Kin you fathom that word ? " he asked.

Mary studied it long, and spelled audibly.

" I ain't had schoolin'," she said. " You know that, Peleg. Only what my sister Faith showed me. She went part of four summers, and could read good as the parson." She held the paper in her hands.

" E-q-u-i-v . . No, Peleg, I can't git senses to it. What's it mean ? "

"I don't know," said Peleg helplessly. "Us jist were cur'ous like."

Mary got up slowly and came around the table. She put her cheek against Peleg's and an arm around his neck.

"You ain't hidin' nothin'?" she asked softly.

"Me?" said Peleg faintly.

"It's been in your eyes," said Mary, "and I'm feared . . ." Her voice faltered. "Is't money?" she managed.

Peleg reached into his jacket pocket.

"Us were tryin' to not make bother," he said gently, "but us'll never hold back what's right you should know. Us always bungled lines," he went on bitterly, "and this is a mess o' poor tackle, sure."

Holding her there, he told her of his buying of the ticket and of the results.

Mary, tense as he was, kissed him.

"It can't make bad if it comes to law," she comforted him. "You kin prove you didn't know 'cause you can't read."

Peleg's relief at such a verdict was mixed.

"But us wouldn't like that spread up and down along," he pleaded. "Kin you make sense to that letter?"

Mary sighed, then stirred.

"There's a place like for signin'," she pointed. "Mebbe that's to do with licence. You got to keep in the law, Peleg."

"Sure us has," said Peleg suddenly, his mind made up. "Take the writin' pen an' put my name down, Mary. Us'll do what's right we should, and come the parson gits here us'll 'splain it all."

"But the best to do," said Mary after she had written as bidden, "will be to send a letter along with it."

Peleg pounded his knee.

" You'm a smart one," he praised. " That beats all Jake could do. He never thought of that idea once't."

Mary got paper and wrote steadily.

" DERE SIRS :—

Am sorry the car was drawed on me. Can it be fixed so I don't have to pay no licence or no money. I have no cash to spare and fish is down. I'm sinin this paper where the dots begin and hope that is no more until the parson comes. We will have him rite and splane that we have no money and ment the fifty sense to help them that was into the war. Please don't law us or ship the car.

Yores truely,

PELEG FILLER.

P.S. There is no rodes up her to have a car."

Jake was at the wharf the next morning, and feverishly inquisitive.

" What you'm plannin' to do ? " he asked at first opportunity.

" Nothin'," said Peleg laconically. " Us signed it."

" Signed ? " Jake looked tragic.

" Sure," said Peleg. " Us said Mary were a smart one, an' her is. We sent a letter 'long with the paper."

" You told her ? "

Peleg nodded.

" When it comes to papers inside the law," he said solemnly, " us is goin' to pull fair with Mary. Her said quick off to put a letter in that would 'splain."

" But you'm signed ? " Jake held his pose.

" Sure us did."

" Then you'm got somethin' to pay shippin' on." Jake produced a dirty page torn from a catalogue. " When Cap'n

Seain were gettin' his he h'istin' engine, I were there when the agent come, and when they had part bargained for a gas one, the agent showed this picture and said it were the e-q-u-i-v-a-l-e-n-t in steam. That come clear as mackerel to me this mornin'. You'm signed to git one of them e-q-things."

Peleg looked, and stared. The picture showed a cumbersome jumble of rods and wheels and gears.

"Looks like she'd weigh a ton," said Jake sombrely, "and it'll be on the mail boat to-morrow night."

Peleg left him without a word and went heavily to his fishing.

It was the longest day he ever experienced. Every gull seemed mocking him, every jagged bit of coastline seemed to resemble the "equivalent" engine he had signed for. His only hope was in the letter Mary had written.

At the supper table he told her all about it; pictured, as well as he could, the mass of wheels and gears. She listened with bated breath and her cheeks whitened.

"What'll they charge on the freight?" she whispered.

"Jake paid four-fifty on gear he got from Duck Cove," said Peleg dismally. "It didn't look heavy."

"Never mind," said Mary. "We're livin' fair an' we will. The captain ain't never hard on people. There's nine dollars in the box an' that'll pay."

"Nine dollars!" Peleg wanted to groan.

"Us'll have tackle to help unload," he answered. "That'll count some."

But there was no freight for Peleg and the boat did not linger. Thankful for the respite, Peleg coiled his rope and stowed his tackle, then went over to the store. The mail was being sorted and suddenly the storekeeper held a letter up.

"You again, Peleg," he called.

Peleg, startled so that he stumbled, grasped it with unsteady fingers and hurried out. Within ten minutes Mary was opening it. A long, perforated yellow slip with stamps on it slid to the table.

" A money cheque ! " she gasped. She gazed at it wonderingly, studied the figures. " Eight hundred an' forty dollars ! "

Peleg's hands gripped the table edge so that his knuckles whitened. He was voiceless, stunned. Mary turned to the letter.

" ' Dear Sir,' " she read in a tremulous voice. " ' WWe thank you for your letter of e-x-p-l-a-n, explanation, and e-n-c-l-o, enclose, our cheque for eight hundred and forty dollars. You have our best wishes for the future. S-i-n-c, sincerely.' The rest's his name. Oh, Peleg ! "

She clung to him, ecstatic, excited, and finally calmed to reverent thankfulness with tears on her cheeks. Peleg could only stroke her hair awkwardly and stare at the slip of paper.

" There's to be no e-q-u-i-v things, then ? " he managed at last.

" None," said Mary, and she kissed him. " We're all clear and above board."

Peleg held her, kissed her.

" Peleg," she whispered, " I dreamed again I was at Pilley's Pond in the hospital, and now I'm goin', I'm goin', I'm goin'. I couldn't be happier if you was captain of the biggest ship afloat."

It was dusk when Jake came, and he scanned their faces incredulously.

" It didn't come," he said, " but they told me you'm got a letter from St. John's. You have to go down ? "

" No," said Peleg, " nor nothin' ain't comin' on the mail boat. They ain't shippin' that thing."

" Jist dropped ? " Jake let the match he held to his pipe burn his fingers.

" No," said Peleg again. " Us got the money 'stead of it. That letter Mary writ put everything fair to the wind. Us got eight hundred and forty dollars."

" Eight hun . . ." Jake's pipe fell to the floor.

" A money cheque, stamps and all."

They pulled it from the envelope and let him see for himself, fix his eyes on the unbelievable figures.

" Smokin' tarfish tackle ! " he ejaculated in a whisper. " You'm rich for life. Wh-what you write ? " He gazed at Mary in profound admiration.

" Us can't remember 'zact words," said Peleg with dignity, " an' it's 'tween us an' them anyhow. One thing's sure——" his pride for her was in his face—" she writ the right ones."

" Her must have," admitted Jake slowly, groping for his pipe. " Her's wonnerful clever."

" An' now," said Peleg kindly, " you needn't bother 'bout payin' Mary."

" No," said Mary heartily. " You tell Peggy."

Jake gazed at them both, taut with his emotion, then reached hurriedly for his cap.

" Us will," he said thickly. " It'll 'lieve her mind wonnerful. She's been poorly, worryin' how to git the money afore September. Any time there's anythin' us kin do . . ." He fumbled in his pocket. " Here's the e-q-u-i-v thing you signed to git if Mary hadn't writ," he said. " Want to have't to look at ? "

" Sure," said Peleg.

When Jake had gone he pinned the soiled paper in position beside the clock. It would help him in explaining the details to the neighbours who would flock in next day to see the miraculous " money cheque."

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

My Brother and I Were Walking

In spring, my brother and I were walking along a lane, which ran curving beneath the downs. This was when we were younger. He is dead now. It was a day when the sun had leapt higher into the sky, so that we knew summer would soon come, with long days and evenings. Trees were in full leaf, but their green was unsullied. No dust had yet risen to dull it.

But we didn't notice the green consciously, nor the sun, except that its heat made walking irritating. Nothing felt right with my clothes: my collar was too tight, the tie old and dull, the coat heavy. It had a belt to it. My brother called it a Norfolk jacket. Coats at that time didn't have belts. He wore a new plus-four suit. This was only the second time that he had worn it. It was light in colour, a mixture. A nice colour.

He was at Oxford, and I was still at school. When he came down from Oxford at the end of each term, he spoke in a precise voice and nodded his head as he spoke, always smiling just with the corners of his mouth. I did not like this. It seemed to me "affected." I could not say more.

As we walked along the lane, which we both knew well and from habit had ceased to notice, he talked about people whom we knew, and told me anecdotes. I know now that he did this because he wanted somebody at home to understand him. It was part kindness, part a desire for sympathy, and part also to show me his superiority. But as his commonplace was my extraordinary, I never got to the particular because I was so shocked by the general. If his story took place in a pub, it took all my time to visualise a pub and fight against a priggish fear I had of them. I had no mind for the story.

So that he felt a resistance in me. There was an actual resistance, due as much to resentment of his greater age as to moral indignation. But the strangeness of his life made the resistance even greater than I wanted it to be. And that, I suppose, strengthened the moral indignation.

We turned off the road, up towards the downs on a rutted cart-track. That way we could make a round, over the downs and by the chalk lane back into the village. As we walked up the hill, we could not keep abreast; we went either side the track or one behind the other. So that it was difficult for us to talk.

I wanted to play a game, which we had often played together. Mangolds were stacked in the field and roofed in with mud and straw. The end from which they took the mangolds for the cattle was open, and some lay strewn on the earth. The game was to push a stick into the succulent middle and then sling the mangold at your opponent. The pleasure consisted in the plop made when the mangold left the stick and the exertion of lifting and throwing the weight. Also you might be caught by a farmer. It did not matter that you could never throw hard or fast enough to hit your opponent. The target was merely the excuse.

But now he would not play the game, because it was beneath his dignity, his prim little dignity in nice-coloured plus-fours. I lifted my stick with a mangold at the end and swung it at him as he walked away. It lobbed in the air towards him. I called, "Look out!" All I wanted was that he should move, recognising it and my existence. But he didn't look round even.

It fell, striking him between the shoulder-blades, and knocked him forward, almost off his balance.

I laughed and ran forward, saying, "I didn't mean to. Are you hurt?"

He said, "Damn you!" and I laughed.

We went on then, walking either side the road, he on a footpath by the hedge, I on the rough grass by the edge of the field.

He was angry, and I was ashamed and cut off from him, and kept laughing. We began the steeper climb of the hill.

He said, "What is this religious society you go to?"

I didn't answer.

He said, "There is one, isn't there?"

I said, "Oh, yes. There is one."

"Well, what is it?"

"It's good. I like it."

"But what happens?"

I said, "Do you think you might join it?"

He said, "How can I say, when I don't know what happens? You must explain. What do they talk about?"

"It's a good thing," I said, "and I like it. There was a chap who came down the other day; he was a rowing blue at Cambridge, very tall and religious. Very strong; well, I saw him lift a boy up with his hand who must have weighed nine and a half stone, so you can see. And it's all quite informal. I mean, there's a lot of ragging about beforehand

and afterwards, so you wouldn't think they were religious at all."

"Are they?"

"What?"

"Religious at all?"

"Yes, of course. But not pi. I don't mean that. But really, really religious."

"And what did the rowing blue talk about?"

"About games," I said, "and playing them hard, and keeping our bodies fine for Christ's sake. He said Jesus was our best friend."

"Good God!"

"Yes," I said. "He said that too; that God was good."

"You bloody little fool!" he said; "cut out that smug repartee."

We were about half-way up the hill, and what had been the hedge on my brother's left side was now a sunken hollow, filled with nuts and elders.

I suddenly ran across the track at him with my head down, red and ashamed with tears. The force of my weight carried us both off the footpath, and he crashed back into a clump of nuts. Our combined weights strained back the thin shoots. They could not stand our weights. For a moment we were struggling upright among the branches, then we fell through them, down on to the chalk and began to roll into the bottom. They had cut off some of the straight and thicker shoots for stakes, and all that remained of these were sharp spikes set in the ground. I was afraid that as we fell one of these spikes would strike him and pierce the skull or dislocate the cervical vertebræ. I was afraid also for my eyes, that one would strike through my eye and sink in till it fitted that hole in the skull between the cheek-bone and forehead. Yet at the same time I wanted this to happen, so that irreparable injury

should be done to one or other of us and we be bound together by recrimination.

We rolled interlocked, holding together for safety and getting our arms free to strike one another blows in the ribs, which had more malignancy than power behind them.

When we reached the bottom, my brother was on top of me, and got his fingers to my throat, throttling me. My arms were pinned by his straddling knees.

I tried to hammer his back with my knees. The first time I jerked him forward so hard that his hands went out either side my head on to the chalky earth, to keep himself from falling. But the next blow did not reach, as he was leaning forward too far. He saw he was secure, and wiped the dirt from his hands on to my face. With my legs bent, I levered my body on the feet and shoulder-blades suddenly, and then relaxed. He fell back heavily on my belly; I got my arms free and raised my knee again heavily into his back.

He lost balance, and with my arms I pushed him sideways off me and wriggled scrambling over, and straddled his body as it lay on its side—so he could only move his legs along the ground, and not hit me in the back.

I said, "Do you know what I'm going to do?"

He wouldn't answer; he was trying to get his arms free, which were pinned beneath my weight.

I said, "I'm going to rub your hair in the dirt. Then I shan't do any more to you."

I didn't see how he could get free, but I was afraid he would. I sat on him, while he tried all ways to dislodge me. I would have liked to delay action a little longer, but I didn't dare to. I put my hand on his head and pressed and rubbed it in the chalky earth.

As I did so, all his body strained more than ever to get free, but I held him firmly like a horse between my knees.

He was mad for a time. I knew that if I got up then he might do anything in his anger. After a time, his straining grew less.

I said, " Now, if I get off, will you behave ? "

He said, " Get off."

I said, " Well, behave, then."

I put my hands down on his shoulder and got off from him in one movement. Then I walked up the steep side of the hollow towards the track. Half-way up, I caught hold of an elder tree and looked back at him. He still lay there. I couldn't go till he moved.

Then he leapt up and ran at me. I didn't release my hold, but struck him with my left as he came up. He fell back. I had hit him in the throat.

His nice-coloured plus-fours were covered with green from the elders and white with stains of the earth. There was a small triangular rent at the knee; bits of moss clung to the cloth.

He said, " Look at my plus-fours."

I was sorry and said, " I'm looking; that's why I'm laughing."

Then I climbed back on to the cart-track.

We went home different ways. After that we didn't quarrel.

FRANCIS WATSON

News From Russia

Count Orlov bowed and withdrew. The Empress was left alone in her writing-room. On these mornings when she wrote to M. de Voltaire the regularity of her life was refreshingly modified. Her lover left her a little earlier, her secretary tapped at her door a little later than usual. For an hour and a half nobody disturbed her while she wrote to the little man at Ferney whose post-bag was the biggest single force in the political thought of his day.

The smell of coffee lingered about the chamber. One pound of coffee every morning would have killed most human beings, but Catherine drank her five cups to the dregs. She sat down at her table and took a pinch of snuff to clear her head before communicating with the clearest head in Europe. Once settled to her task she wrote quickly and easily in a strong, flowing hand :

St. Petersburg,
21 Sept. 1771.

" Monsieur,

It is nearly five months since I have taken up my pen for the task which honours it above other pens, and the bust of the most illustrious man of our time regards

me with something of an accusing air from its place above the bookcase stored with the works of that same incomparable mind.

"Yet how, I ask myself, should a scribble in bad French reward such a man? And some years ago I had already decided that my respect could be paid only in the accomplishment of deeds which should please him. In an age which has produced a Voltaire, a Montesquieu, a Beccaria, no hand should remain unemancipated, no mind be robbed of light. Though a woman, I am yet a sovereign, pledged to be the instrument of progress. Within ten years oxygen, nitrogen and hydrogen are discovered. Man advances daily towards his glorious consummation, and were I to lag in the rear of this advance I should indeed be unworthy to know the name of Voltaire.

"Thus I argued, and I laid at your feet, Monsieur, the trophies of my first victory. The foremost among my people, I had bared my arm to the knife of the inoculator, and smallpox fled in confusion. You know how I had weakly dreaded this scourge that has laid low even the mightiest; how time and again I gave myself up to terror and summoned my physician, and how that good man never found anything worse than measles. Then, Monsieur, came this Dr. Dimsdale from England. I submitted to his attentions. It was a triumph for medical progress. I was not in bed for a moment, and I continued my duties as though nothing had happened. Immediately I gave orders that the Grand Duke should be inoculated, and after him my Grand Master of Artillery, Count Orlov, that hero who by his courage and magnanimity recalls the ancient Romans of the great days of the Republic. The day

after the operation Count Orlov was out hunting in a heavy snowstorm.

" All this you know, and how the Court flocked to Dr. Dimsdale to be freed of its fear. And you were generous enough to commend my action in establishing hospitals under his supervision and in sending him into every house of education, that not even the poorest of my subjects should lack the benefit he had to confer. In one month more people were inoculated in St. Petersburg than in eight months in Vienna. Nothing could arrest the advance of the wonderful new treatment.

" And now, Monsieur, I have to talk of Moscow, where a distressing malady has raged throughout the summer. Convinced that the outbreak is of smallpox, I have sent doctors and supplies of lymph to the stricken city, with roubles enough to see the work through. Not for nothing will they call me ' Little Mother,'—yet when they are free and well, which of them will acknowledge that everything is due to you, my guide and my inspiration in all such projects ? Before I return to Moscow next spring it will be a new city, for when I have cleansed its inhabitants of disease I will raze their pestilential wooden houses to the ground and build them anew of brick and stone.

" One great force supports me, a force at which you, illustrious scourge of the priesthood, will mock. The Church is on my side, and nowhere in the world do the people fear, cherish and obey their clergy as they do in Moscow, and indeed throughout Russia. Bishops themselves have been inoculated—what further proof of the brightening dawn can you ask ? When next I write to you, Monsieur. . . ."

Five hundred miles to the south-east, the Archbishop of Moscow sat in his leather-backed chair in his residence in the Kremlin. The tiled stove gave out a dry and stuffy heat, for Father Ambrosius was old enough to feel the Russian winter six weeks before the first snowflakes were driven on a raw east wind across the Beautiful Square.

He looked up at the dark-robed French doctor who stood beside the stove, rubbing long white fingers in its warmth.

"Monsieur," said the Archbishop, "this is the age of light."

"I am delighted to hear you concede it, Father," replied the physician drily. The idea of light in this land of semi-Asiatic darkness appealed to the irony of the exile from Parisian civilisation. Throughout a whole summer he and his assistants had laboured in plague-stricken Moscow, and the number of lives that they had saved could be counted on the fingers of one hand. For all the Empress's roubles he had begun to wish himself back under the plane-trees in the Rue St. Honoré. In Paris patients did not stone their physicians. He put one hand up to his face and touched a long cut above the left cheek-bone. It was still raw, and he winced, as much from indignation as from pain.

"You have met with an accident?" inquired the Archbishop politely. "And in the service of the sick? Give thanks to God, for it is His own cause for which you suffer!"

"I give thanks to no one for that scar," said the doctor. "The stone was flung, Reverend Father, by one of your suffering flock. His friends were too weakened by disease to aim straight, and for that indeed my thanks are due. They were howling that the physicians had brought the variola from St. Petersburg. So much for your age of light!"

"Where the Church leads, the people will follow. I will see what I can do."

The doctor's wrath was softened a little by this quiet answer. "That is why I came to you," he said, more gently. "I cannot cure the Muscovites' bodies until you have made their souls more tractable."

"Their souls?"

"Their minds, shall I say? Our philosophic French tongue is apt to confuse the two words, and I am not qualified to debate the distinction."

The old man's eyes hardened. "I will sacrifice no man's soul to his body," he said.

"Good Father, I ask for nothing of the kind. I ask only that a little of the enlightenment which you welcome should be spread among your people by your indisputable authority." He stared intently into the face of the Archbishop, as if uncertain of the reception of his next words. Then, lowering his voice, he said slowly: "I ask that all congregations for religious purposes shall be immediately prohibited throughout Moscow."

The Archbishop half-rose from his chair, then sank back again, gripping the leather arms.

"May God pardon your audacity," he said, crossing himself. "You know that that is an impossible condition!"

But the doctor had gone too far to be turned back. "Impossible or otherwise," he continued, "it is my duty to insist upon it. If you want a single living person to hear Mass next Christmas Day the infection must be arrested now—at once. And this is the only way. Inoculation is hopeless. The few who are well enough to suffer the treatment resist it to the last ounce of their strength. The rest revile us in the streets, if they do no worse, and fly to the Varvarsky Gate to fling themselves in a festering heap at the feet of the Virgin."

The Archbishop again crossed himself, and the doctor

followed him sketchily. Then he went on with renewed vehemence :

" It is a frightful sight. The dead have not been cleared from the Gate for days. It is impossible to make a way to them through the frenzied crowd of the dying. You know what this variola is. When the secondary fever comes on there is delirium. Sometimes coma follows, and we can deal with that. God only knows how many of the comatose have been thrown into the pits with the dead. But our work is with those in the first stage, before the eruption, when we might yet save life. And where are our patients ? Fighting like demons to touch the foot of the Varvarsky Virgin, the greatest plague-carrier in the city. Reverend Father, they *must* be made to see that this is suicide and murder together. Cure them of their superstition, and we will cure them of the pest. If you refuse, nothing more can be done."

" Since when," asked Father Ambrosius, " has it been held a superstition in Catholic France to adore the Blessed Virgin ? "

The doctor made a gesture of impatience. " Forgive me," he said, " but I did not come here to discuss theology. I came to place before you facts which you must face—or prepare for the end of Moscow and all its inhabitants. There is no other course. If you will not prevent the people assembling indiscriminately you must at least persuade them that infected images, however holy, cannot cure smallpox. The Varvarsky plague-spot must be wiped out, or my helpers and I must return to St. Petersburg and tell her Imperial Majesty that Moscow is irrevocably doomed. She will probably have half of us knouted and the rest sent to Siberia, but that will not save you or your flock."

The Archbishop appeared untroubled by this warning.

"Have you passed the Varvarsky Gate to-day?" he asked simply.

"No. I avoided it in coming here. I can do nothing for the wretches, and one cut cheek is enough for me."

"A pity. I should have been interested to know how the public reacted to the loss of their Virgin."

"Loss? Do you mean that the Varvarsky . . ."

"I had the sacred image removed last night and brought here. After the purifications prescribed both by rubric and medical practice it has been sealed up in my vaults. It is quite inaccessible."

For a moment the physician stared at the Archbishop as though he did not believe him. Then he said: "Father Ambrosius, I owe you an apology and a tribute. By this deed you may have saved your city."

"Or sold it to the devil," replied the old man. "The people will submit to me, of course. I have taken steps to make known that I was the author of this rather doubtful action. If I had not done so, some poor wretch might have suffered for it—you, for instance. The Church should lead the people to the light, not follow. In my mind I know that I have done rightly, for this, as I observed to you a few moments ago, is the age of light. But in my heart I am painfully aware that Lucifer also trafficked in light. And Prometheus suffered severely."

The doctor's relief was such that he permitted himself banter. "Has Prometheus, then, a place in your calendar?" he asked. "In Paris they write interminable poems about him. The orthodox Greek Faith, I confess, is something of a mystery to me."

"Long may it remain so," replied the Archbishop gravely, and rose from his chair to indicate that the interview was at an end.

The doctor, eager to be at work again now that he had been given a glimmer of fresh hope, took his leave courteously, made a reverence before the image of Our Lady of Kazan in one corner of the room, and moved towards the door. As he passed the single large window that gave upon a balcony overlooking the Beautiful Square, he paused, and gazed for a minute or two over the city. The morning sunlight gilded the flowering cupolas of the four great cathedrals within the Kremlin walls. The huge gun that had never been fired and the forty-ton bell that had never been hung, caught the light on the florid carvings of their greenish bronze. They seemed to the Frenchman fantastic symbols of the Russia that strove to be magnificent and each time over-reached itself. Immediately below him a beggar was sitting with crossed legs in the Square, rocking his head monotonously to and fro. The doctor could see quite clearly the signs he knew so well; the erythematous outbreak colouring the face, especially near the roots of the hair, a dusky red. The sufferer was about four days gone with the fever, and could still be saved. But at that moment a woman, her features distorted with inflammation, dragged herself on her hands and knees towards the man and thrust something into his lap. It seemed to be a scrap of bread that she had scavenged, for the man, still rocking backwards and forwards, lifted it to his mouth. Almost immediately he was seized with a fit of vomiting and rolled over helplessly upon his side. The woman, exhausted by her effort and by the disease, collapsed beside him, and they lay there like two corpses. A mangy dog approached and nosed around them. But for them the great Square was empty.

"Your people love you, Father," said the doctor without turning round. "They come to your doorstep to die. Look, here are some more. They are flocking to you!"

Father Ambrosius joined him at the window. It was true. The Square had been deserted for weeks and no marketing had been done there since the Quasimodo Fair. But now it was filling up. Ill-clad, plague-ridden figures stumbled in twos and threes towards the inert couple at the Archbishop's threshold, and presently it was seen that these were but the scouts of an advancing rabble of Muscovites. Round the corner of the barracks the main body came into sight, led by an immense man with a blue-black beard and a face pitted by the remnants of the disease from which his extraordinary physique had enabled him to recover.

"It is Pugachev the Cossack," murmured the Archbishop. "What may this mean?"

The doctor gave a start of fear.

"Pugachev the Devil?"

"The serfs do not call him that. He has killed their proprietors with his own hands. He is Pugachev the Saviour. Some of them say that Peter III was not killed at Ropcha and that this is he. The Empress is having a cage made for him, but the soldiers who should put him in it are all stricken with the pest. Even a headsman will be hard to find."

The doctor's hand reached nervously again to the wound on his cheek.

"There are five hundred swarming after him," he said, "and all pox-ridden. Where do these Russians get their strength? Look at those prodromal rashes—and there, even children dancing along with vesicles that become pustules while you watch them. It's against nature. Ah, one of them is down! They're walking over him. Good God, can you see?"

"My eyes are too old to observe the symptoms which excite your interest, Monsieur. I see only my own people, coming to their Archbishop for his blessing."

"Or to their physician to stone him," replied the doctor. "Is there a door at the back of your house?"

"There is. A rather famous one, called the Coward's Gate. Be kind enough to send me my chaplain as you go."

Without another word the doctor hurried out. Father Ambrosius continued to stand at the window, his hands clasped behind him, his face expressionless. The mob of sufferers had halted directly below him, and Pugachev seemed to be haranguing them. No sound reached the Archbishop, but he saw the struggling gesticulations of inflamed hands and the movement of swollen mouths. Every face was hideous with eruptions, and scarcely-covered limbs were contorted in intermittent rigor. Not horror, but an intense and all-embracing pity possessed the old man's mind, and tears crept slowly down the tightly-drawn skin of his cheeks.

A young priest coughed discreetly behind him. Still gazing over the Square, the Archbishop gave brief directions to his attendant, who withdrew and in a moment or two returned with a rich robe of smaragd and the archiepiscopal crown.

"Their fault is not lack of faith," murmured the Archbishop as the priest invested him, "but excess of it. By the faith of reason and enlightenment they can be healed, but by blind faith they will destroy themselves. If you had said that, my son, I should have summoned you for heresy. Yet it is true. Your Empress will tell you so, and Catherine Alexeievna has authority. Who set the crown on her head? Who administered the Sacrament at her coronation? Herself. If she writes in friendship to the Anti-Christ of Ferney, is she not still the head of the Church? Is she not the High Priestess of the Age of Light? Shall Russia for ever remain barbarous and holy?"

The chaplain made no answer to these remarkable questions. His Archbishop was very old, and a little madness should be humoured in the very old. He turned to go, but as he did so he saw for the first time what it was that held the gaze of the old man's pale blue eyes. He saw the square filled with a rout of pestilential creatures, and his ears, sharper than those of Father Ambrosius, caught the cry that was drawn from the diseased throats by the oratory of the black-bearded giant. He stole a glance at the set face of the Archbishop, and knew that pleading would be useless. Pale with fear, he slipped silently from the room, and ran through all the building with words of grim warning that quickly sent a stream of fugitives through the Coward's Gate and out over the river to safer quarters.

Quite alone now, the green-robed Archbishop fumbled with the fastening of the window. The early sun shone full upon the livid faces of his flock.

As he opened the window and stepped out upon the balcony with a hand raised in blessing, the words that had roused his whole household to panic came up to him in a hoarse roar :

" Give us back the Mother of God ! "

Father Ambrosius did not move a muscle. With his hand still stretched over the crowd he stood in patient dignity as though he had been before the high altar in the Cathedral of Saint Basil the Beatified. The beams of the sun shed a glory round his jewelled crown as he waited for his people to kneel and hear him.

Here and there a head was bowed, a figure swayed forward as if in reverence, and the Archbishop, confident of submission, forgave the hesitant manner of it. But it was the plague that extorted this homage.

The gigantic Cossack took a pace forward and stood with

legs astride and hands clasping his belt, staring unabashed at the figure of authority on the balcony.

" You have stolen the Varvarsky Virgin," he said in level tones. " The people perish. Give her back ! "

Before the Archbishop could reply the cry was taken up again, more loudly and more fiercely than before :

" The Virgin ! Give us back the Virgin ! "

And suddenly the crowd was stirred like the grass of the Steppes before the wind, and given an impulse and a direction. They surged past their leader towards the door below the balcony, and the thud of their massed bodies on the stout oak shook the iron window-frame above.

Still the Archbishop refused to believe that this was revolt. Frenzied by suffering, they would yet listen to the voice of God's Minister when they had spent their first fury. Raising his thin voice, he called to Pugachev to rally his followers so that he might speak to them. But the only answer was a billet of wood, hurled from the fringe of the throng at the Archbishop's head. It struck the sacred diadem and carried it crashing through the window behind. The Archbishop staggered backwards into the room and collapsed into a chair, with splinters of wood and glass clinging to his emerald vestment.

For a while he sat there, striving to control the trembling of his limbs for a fresh effort, while the yelling of the mob drifted up to him. Above the groans and imprecations he could hear a steady battery on the door below, but fortunately for the remnant of his self-possession he could not see the terrible ramrods of dead and dying men with which the beams were being pounded.

At last he grew calm enough to realise that his only hope lay in flight. Afterwards, when the deluded creatures were too weak to search any further for their beloved eikon, he

would go among them and persuade them to the sole means of recovery. Just now they would not listen to God Himself.

He knelt quietly for a moment at a carved prie-dieu and then, still in his flowing green robe, left the room and made his way down the broad stairs to the courtyard at the back of the building. He had it in mind to have all the bells of the Kremlin tolled, both as a warning to any who might be in danger from the mob and as a last appeal to the conscience of the mob itself. But no one answered his call. The courtyard itself was deserted, save for one old ostler who, shivering with fright, was harnessing a horse between the shafts of a shabby kibitka. The Archbishop's own carriage had disappeared. Even the sledges had gone, though there was no snow yet in the streets of Moscow.

With a single word of direction to the panic-stricken ostler, Father Ambrosius took his seat in the kibitka. The man adjusted the last strap and clambered up in front of him. The wheels groaned and rattled over the stone courtyard, through the Coward's Gate, and out to the bridge.

Through the September sunshine the strange pair drove southwards. The streets were empty of life, and only one old woman, seeing from a window the way they took, set off quickly to the Kremlin to betray them. The mob had broken in, and streamed without control through the vast building, tearing down velvet hangings, smashing mirrors, and even overturning altars in their insane frenzy. Everywhere they went they left the infection of their foulness, and the dying dropped among them and were trampled upon. Many of them found their way into the labyrinth of cellars beneath the Beautiful Square, where the merchants of Moscow stored their stocks of wine. The alcohol revived those who were dropping with the disease and doubled the rage of the

stronger. Joining in the riot, the old woman somehow forced a passage to the side of Pugachev and thrust her pock-marked face up towards his ear.

"He has fled to the Donskoi Monastery," she shouted hoarsely.

With a great oath the Cossack roared the news through the building, and hurried out into the courtyard with the maddened pack at his heels. Over the bridge they swarmed, and southwards through the stricken city on the scent of the despoiler of the Varvarsky Shrine. Many fell by the way, writhing and vomiting in the throes of the fever, but always there were more to swell the hunt. At the Donskoi Monastery they found the gates barred. But neither iron gates nor the laws of sanctuary could keep them from their prey. They surged like a wave against the gates and the bars yielded, though the foremost bodies were broken and twisted with the shock. With Pugachev again at their head they scoured the cells and corridors for their victim, bearing down by sheer weight such monks as could not escape in time.

At last, on his knees before a rough altar in the stone depths of the crypt, the terrible hounds found their quarry. Their yell of bestial fury rang through the echoing vaults as they flung themselves upon the Archbishop and tore him to pieces with their swollen fingers.

* * *

Five hundred miles to the north-west, Catherine concluded her letter.

> ". . . The Turks are beaten on the Danube and in the Crimea. Russia advances in size as she advances in culture. When will you honour us by coming to see for yourself the civilisation which owes so much to your

inspired writings? You need have no apprehensions of the attitude of the clergy. Under my supreme direction the most exalted of them go quietly about their work of enlightening the masses of my subjects.

"That, Monsieur, is the sum of the present 'news from the Pole,' as you are pleased to call my letters. For my long and limping disquisition I have but the excuse of the lively interest which you take in everything that concerns me. Rest assured that I am fully sensible of the value of your esteem, and that there is none who holds you in warmer consideration than

"CATHERINE."

"I take up my pen once more to beg you to protect yourself, with the furs which I am sending, from the cold winds of the Alps, which sometimes, I am told, cause you discomfort."

Glancing at the elegant Boule clock which stood on her writing-table, the Empress observed that she had still twenty-five minutes to herself. Waste of time was intolerable to her nature. She moved to a couch beside the window and took up her embroidery, a set of rich vestments which she was working as a gift for the Archbishop of Moscow.

K. SWINSTEAD-SMITH

"The Marchesa"

Mary was wakened by Viti.

"Come," he whispered. "It is being born."

On his brooding Italian little face there was mingled mystery and awe. His eyes, with their blue whites and starry brilliancy, pleaded and impelled at the same time. His pyjama legs were falling off, and he clutched at them with one hand.

Mary had no need to be told what was being born. All day yesterday the children had talked of nothing but Méline, the cow; and Giacomo, the eldest boy, to whom she belonged, had sat with her until half-past ten stroking her silky ears. As Mary put on her kimono and twisted her golden plait of hair into a knot, she felt Viti's eager little hand pulling her towards the doorway.

"I'm coming, dear," she said, feeling for his hand in the dark.

Outside, Calabria lay grey and unawakened. Soon the sun would come out of the Ionian Sea, turning the dead waters to living pearl and then to aquamarine and azure; the grass round the olive trees would renew its emerald perfection, and the lizards who lived there would wake up and

dart from tree to tree like green lightning; the colour would flow back into the little blue gentians, and the old stone villa in which Mary was staying would glow with a golden warmth. Life—throbbing, pulsing life. This would the sun accomplish. Now life was smudged and dreamy; only below in one of the huts Mary heard a faint lowing, and knew that even in this greyness new life was struggling.

"Listen how she cries!" whispered Viti as they went carefully down the stone stairs together, Mary carrying a candle because it was dark still. They passed out through the three-hundred-year-old stone doorway into the modern garage. Two tiny, yellow-breasted birds flew out from the eaves and vanished, tweeting, into the greyness beyond.

The barn was a poor, tumble-down place, very like the adjoining huts, which were occupied by the Marchesa's peasant workers. A white mule and a brown horse were tethered to a piece of fence, and listened, turning restless, frightened eyes, to the dull lowing within.

Giacomo, who was nearly twelve, came up to them. He looked like an angel in the light of the candle he carried; the sweet brooding adolescence of his face was heightened by a look of anguish; he would throw a stone at a stray dog, but the cow Méline was his, and he suffered with her. Mary understood this, and did not speak to him.

Round the barn stood a silent group of people. In the dark grey dawn and against the star-strewn sky they looked indeed as if they were waiting for a message. Mary knew them all, but in the drama of this early morning they were all different. There stood seventy-year-old Seraphina, wrinkled and yellow, her head tied up in its black rag, motionless, her claw-like hands grasping a stump of candle. Next to her was Maria, her daughter, a superb Calabrian peasant woman. How often Mary had seen her swinging

through the olives, her lusty baby on her back, and half a ton of water balanced fearlessly on her head. Now she stood like a Greek statue, her naked feet planted deeply into the earth, holding her great soft breast to her child, her eyes fixed attentively on the closed door of the barn.

So they all stood and waited.

"It won't be long now, Miss Graham," whispered the Marchesa.

She had a black coat wrapped round her up to the chin—her dusty, badly kept hair hung down on either side of her white, heavy, youngish face. She spoke English huskily with a beautiful accent.

She took Viti's hand and felt it quivering.

"Little excited boy," she said, smiling her strange, slow smile.

Viti struggled to get his hand away, his eyes fixed on the barn.

The elder boys were creeping in and out of the barn. They had always known the meaning of birth and death.

"I want to see, too," said Viti, breathlessly, turning up his eyes to Mary—"Let me go."

She let him go and he darted away. Presently he came back breathing rather hard. Mary put her arm round him; he was trembling—he was only seven.

Luigi, the second boy, left off going into the barn. He stood among the peasants, his heavy, cupped, dark eyes half shut. He looked older than Giacomo, although he was only ten. Once he picked up a stone and hurled it at the little pariah puppy that was standing shivering at the entrance of the vineyard.

"Basta," said Mary under her breath at him. "Capite, basta."

He looked her up and down with his somnolent brown eyes.

Mary drew her kimono tighter round her and bent to speak to Viti. Luigi must never know that she minded his eyes—a child of ten—it was ridiculous!

Suddenly Brunone came out of the barn smiling. He was brown as the earth, and he had a strange grace about him.

"Ecco," he said straightening himself. "Tutto è bene, Signora Marchesa. Com'e carina la vitella!" and he went away to the well to wash his hands.

Each in turn they went into the dark fœtid barn to see the little new life. Giacomo stood in the doorway, and the peasants took their orders from him quietly and docilely. Viti went in with Mary. Méline stood tied up at one end of the barn, her eyes still rolling with fright. In the dark hay lay the little calf trembling with new life. Viti stood rigid looking down at it.

"Born," he said wonderingly, and gave a great shuddering sigh of delight.

Going back to the house, Mary saw that the sun was already up. Viti had left her suddenly, tearing away to join the others. She knew that it was no use going to bed again, for soon the children would go shouting into the strange primitive bathroom and the tutor would turn on the shower. She had not seen the tutor at the barn—perhaps, poor young man, he had no dressing-gown. But surely such a little thing as that would not matter in Calabria. Still, he was very shy. She washed and dressed. It was time to go and bath Viti, if Seraphina had got the stove going, throwing in twig after twig with her old knarled hands as if for a sacrifice.

She had to go through the Marchesa's room to get to him, for all the rooms in the house led out of one another. The Marchesa had evidently been to sleep again, for as Mary went in she was waking up, pushing the blue crêpe-de-chine sheets down to her waist, shaking her dull hair out of her

eyes, stretching and yawning again and again, her large white teeth snapping between every yawn. With her long white Italian hand she began to scratch her back and her right breast, large and curved under the soiled nightdress—Calabrian fleas were persistent, and although every one in the house had scarves pinned round their beds, which kept off the multitude, there were always a few stray ones.

"Is that you, Miss Graham?" she said in her slow Southern drawl. She lay still, her hands clasped behind her neck, the long dark silky hairs in her arm-pits glistening with perspiration.

"I'm just going to bath Viti," said Mary.

"How excited he was—my baby." The Marchesa's great purple-blue eyes softened. "How am I going to leave them for a fortnight, Miss Graham?"

"What time is your train?"

"I leave here at twelve. I reach Naples to-morrow. If only it wasn't necessary for me to go! But I must go—I am going to try and get a man acquitted—a negro. My friends say, Why bother about a negro; but I say, A negro is a man, and he is in my service, and if he is convicted he will get ten years in prison, so my lawyers and I are going to make a fight."

"It's wonderful of you to take such an interest," murmured Mary.

"What else could a civilised person do."

A civilised person! Mary looked at her. No, she thought, intelligent, interesting, cultured even, but not civilised. Suddenly her eyes met those of the Marchesa. They had turned almost black, they held her mesmerised, they wandered from her golden plaits of hair neatly coiled to the fresh washing silk frock and the slim, straight-drawn silk stockings.

"Go and bath Viti now, please, Miss Graham," she said, smiling still, but hissing the words between her shut teeth. Quietly Mary went.

"She's like an animal," thought the English girl, as she stood looking out of the window in the bathroom with her back to Viti.

Viti was easily shamed.

"No, no, no, no, no," he cried as she turned round, clutching his pyjamas round his skinny little boy's body. He did not mind her ministrations when he was in the bath, for he thought the water covered him up, and by the time he was out of it he had forgotten to be ashamed.

"Why do I feel as if something is going to happen?" thought Mary, as she rubbed the little boy under his arms.

He stood like a baby Christ with his arms outstretched, his blue eyes mysteriously dark and brooding, his bright pink lips parted. He watched intently the little drops of water that fell plonk plonk on to the floor from his hair. He bent down and put his finger wonderingly into one of the drops, and then showed the finger to Mary and laughed. His tiny milk teeth were like a calf's. He jumped about the bathroom in his combinations, singing little bits, calling to himself, making little imaginary birds fly away from his fingers. Suddenly he came up to Mary and punched her with a doubled-up fist. She smacked his hand and he laughed again.

"Animals," thought Mary again—"interesting enough, but just animals."

As she came down to breakfast she caught glimpses at every window of the Ionian Sea, blue-purple now like a piece of rich cloth with a white selvage. She passed Brunone staggering into the kitchen with two water-barrels on his

back. His eyes were bright blue in his brown face, his muscles rippled all over his body.

They were already seated at the long trestle table when she came in, except for the Marchesa, who breakfasted in bed. This room had been a refectory in olden times; there were still frescoes on the walls, but the little cells of the monks had been turned into glass-pantries and linen-cupboards. Two slender carved pillars stood near together in the middle of the room and took the weight of the ceiling. Beside each of these stood a Sicilian water-barrel, brightly decorated, filled with decaying orange-peel and cigarette ends. These were never emptied from year's end to year's end. Everybody ate oranges—they lay about all over the house—the barrels were convenient for disposing of the peel. The tutor and the boys stood up when she came in. She said good-morning to the tutor in French, for he did not speak English, and her Italian was still far from perfect. She would have liked to have spoken Italian with him for practice, but somehow she did not quite like to leave off speaking French.

He was a strange, quiet young man. He seemed to have no possessions except his Dante and commentary, and a pair of carpet slippers, which he kept under an old Italian grammar. Mary had to go through his room every time to reach the bathroom, but she never saw anything personal about. And yet he dressed quite well, but more like an estate-agent than a tutor. He liked to dictate to the peasants, and was in his element dealing out the seeds to them, which he did once a week on the old brown table in the refectory where the seeds were kept. Sometimes he rolled his shirt-sleeves up to weigh them out, and his arms were boyish and thin and well-shaped. He always pulled them down directly Mary came into the room. His hair was exuberant and

refused to lie flat, so he cut it very short, almost like a convict. He had full Italian lips and nice, kind, hazel eyes. He came from the North, from Milan. He used to cut figures out of magazines sometimes and made them walk about and talk. Viti would sit on the edge of his knee and watch these figures breathlessly, and sometimes he got quite as excited as the little boy. He had a framed medallion of the Virgin hanging over his bed, but he never appeared to go to Mass. He kept a photo of all the children in his pocket-book, but he boxed their ears for next to nothing, and he had much too violent a temper to be a good teacher.

"Good-morning, Miss," said Luigi. In his sleepy almond-shaped eyes there was a hint of mockery. "Viti, silly ass," he remarked in execrable English. They learnt those kind of remarks in English very quickly.

"Good-for-nothing fool!" shouted the tutor. "Rude, saucy imp!"

Luigi grovelled, but recovered immediately.

"Beautiful Miss," he remarked over the top of his cup of coffee and milk.

Mary turned away and asked the tutor why he had not been at the barn, and Giacomo, feeding Ivan, the wolfhound, under the table with bread and marmalade, launched into a description of the little calf and the difficulty Méline had had in producing her. It seemed impossible to Mary that it was only three hours ago—that grey, dim silence. Through the window she watched five peasants move languorously across the fields, their soft, swinging limbs as rhythmical as the burling splash of the waves. In the distance two thin oxen had started their pitiful, blindfolded circle.

They had barely finished breakfast when the Marchesa came downstairs. She walked beautifully from the hips, and her large round breasts hung loose inside her dress. The dress

had once seen the Rue de la Paix, but hard usage had sadly altered its lines; there were marks too down the front where she had spilt food. Mary wondered whether she had even brushed her hair, and her sleeping white face might or might not have seen water. And yet she was beautiful—strangely, terribly beautiful, as Calabria was beautiful. And with her came that strange disturbing atmosphere, that sense of tremendous vitality, and power, that like an animal lay sleeping in the sun, but which could wake viciously, fiercely. And she always looks like this, thought Mary, thinking of the luxurious flat she had been to in Naples, of the Palazzo in Florence.

The Marchesa stood for a while lifting the little bags of grain on the grain table, opening some and letting the seeds trickle through her fingers. At intervals she asked the tutor some questions sharply, and then the boys came tumbling in and into the store-room to get their bicycles. Mary began to think that it was the incongruity of the life which fascinated her most. There they hung, those bicycles, in that tumble-down crumbling Calabrian barn, a filthy place, crumbling as it had been crumbling since the fifteenth century, most likely, and now on the walls hung the bicycles like a Gamage's show-room, each on its proper rest, with its proper equipment lying beneath it. They should have been dirty and uncared for and rusty, and there they were, glistening and oiled and perfect. There was a great tinkling of bells, and out they came into the refectory, pedalling round and round the table like three furies, and the Marchesa and the tutor went on sifting little bags of grain, and only Mary wanted to laugh because everything was so mad.

"I have time to walk with you all to the drinking-pool and back," said the Marchesa, picking up a fox fur and slinging it round her shoulders. In it her swinging, stealthy

walk seemed to become intensified, as if she had festooned herself with her prey.

"I'm being fantastic," thought Mary, but the thought persisted.

They went out into the bright sunlight.

"You know, I'm really more English than Italian," said the Marchesa to Mary, as they strolled along the little zigzag path through the olives. "I was always the favourite of the headmistress when I was at school at Brighton—she used to ask me into her room on Sunday afternoons to pour out tea for her guests."

"Did you like Brighton?" asked Mary. The sun, the bitter-sweet smell of the olives, and the rhythm of the sheep bells coming on little gusts of scented wind, made her drowsy and quiescent.

The tutor walked a little behind, his hands behind his back. Now and again he would stop and examine the tiny fruit of an olive tree. Every time he stopped, Ivan, the wolfhound, stopped too. The young man never seemed to notice the dog, but the animal was always close beside him.

"Yes, everything English always—I feel I am half English," went on the Marchesa, and her soft, slow voice seemed full of the sun. "How I wish I could have married an Englishman!"

Brunone and a boy passed them, leading the white horse loaded with faggots.

"Signora Marchesa," he murmured, bowing low and whipping the horse off the pathway.

"One moment we are in the twentieth century and the next in the Middle Ages!" thought Mary.

"He was a dreadful man, my husband," went on the Marchesa. "Sometimes he would bring home a carozza

with nearly naked women in it. Just think of it—the humiliation ! "

" You are not divorced ? " asked Mary.

" No. One must think—the children. And then it is very difficult in Italy. We are separated—he lives in Paris, and I send him money that he may not disgrace our name. I care nothing for myself now—I live my life for my children."

They came bicycling back along the track, three mad things, beautiful with health.

" Mamma, mamma," shrieked Viti, his feet on the handle-bars. " Look, look ! " His eyes were like two blue gentians.

" They are splendid, yes ? " said the Marchesa. " I should like them to go to Oxford—yes, very much. Now everything falls on me, and when one has property, Miss Graham, there is always so much to do, to see to——"

They climbed to the old stone wall which bounded the Marchesa's estate. There was always, even on the hottest day, a clean strong wind blowing here from the sea. To the right in the distance lay a huddled black village, with the curse of malaria lying athwart it like a great dread, and behind lay the sea of olive trees and the old yellow house with its courtyard slumbering in the heat. They turned to the right, keeping to the top of the hill, and then slowly descended. Now they were walking along a sinister path edged with giant cactus. One great leaf lay broken and rotting in the way. There was something terribly wicked about it, with its spikes like giant needles and its yellow, rotting, spongy pulp. Overhead the sky grew every minute more intense. Now there was no trace of the early-morning purity; it looked like a great solid dome of purple-blue. But Mary, who knew the walk well, knew that soon the cactus walk would end and then would come the deliciousness

of the surprise. Always when she came this way she held her breath and got the same thrill of beauty, for suddenly the cactus ended and the path wandered along the edge of the orange grove; and now all was young again like the setting of a fairy tale, for only fairies could dance in and out among those gentians and the little wild strawberry plants and the yellow flowers that had no name and the wild sweet clover and the brilliant fronds of fern. Some blue-and-white butterflies were playing here, and the bees were droning in the clover.

"How bewildering Calabria is!" said Mary suddenly, and then more suddenly came the thought—"and how like the Marchesa!"

It was nearly 11.30 when they got back to the house.

"I must pack," said the Marchesa. "Good fellow," she said to Ivan, stroking him, and then she told Mary how much Ivan loved her—"like my servants," she said, "they always adore me. Carlotta will be heartbroken when I go."

Suddenly the hand that was stroking him stopped its motion.

"This dog has not been groomed," she said, the soft laziness of her gone, her body rigid.

Brunone was in the corner of the garage. He stammered a few words, looking up at her blindly. She hit him across the cheek with her open palm. She was swept with fury. She stood with her arms akimbo on her waist and her voice, out of control, shrieked and whispered. The children huddled behind the car, and Mary stood white-faced and trembling and disgusted. And then it was all over—her arms drooped, her black staring pupils burned into soft blue-purple once more. She shook her hair out of her eyes.

"These peasants!" she said to Mary, smiling. "Will you come and help me pack, Miss Graham?"

The lovely spoiled gowns were pushed into the two suit-cases. The Marchesa put on a black travelling dress and a black hat with a veil—there were buttons missing, and Mary lent her safety-pins out of her work-bag.

"Such a nuisance having to dress well," said the Marchesa, "but when one has a position——" Her hair was bundled away under the veil, her strong white neck shone out of the black.

The boys crowded round her in the car to say good-bye. She kissed each one, tears in her eyes. The two maids came out to kiss her hand, and then she shook hands with the tutor. Mary stood trying to feel indifferent, trying to see how stupid and sentimental it all was.

"Good-bye, Miss Graham," said the Marchesa.

"We shall all miss you," said Mary, almost before she knew she had said it.

"But you are so wonderful with the children," the Marchesa's voice had turned honey-sweet. "I trust them with you so utterly——"

The car moved away and she was gone. The house seemed strangely different. Mary kept the children busy playing and reading, and in the late afternoon took them for another walk, for she felt restless and unable to settle to anything.

Evening came, a heavy dusk, as if the sky were thick blue-black powder; and with it came a strange smell, a smell that came welling out of the volcanic earth like some strange incense—a slumberous, pagan smell.

Dinner was an hour late, and directly afterwards the children went to bed. Viti pranced backwards and forwards with the candle, now to put out his shoes for Seraphina in the morning, now through the yellow curtain into the bath-room for his teeth. In the sitting-room, through the open door, Mary could see the tutor reading, his book near his eyes,

the two candles in the forked brass candlestick flickering about in the draught made by the boys as they rushed in and out.

"Why aren't you two in bed?" he shouted at them.

"Going now, Professor," shouted Giacomo back to him.

Luigi poked his nose round the curtain of Viti's room and saw Mary sitting on the bed.

"Beautiful Miss," he said again, and his eyes looked at her sensually over the candle. Mary, with annoyance, found her colour rising.

"Go to bed *at once*, Luigi," she said, turning to open Viti's bed. "Little boys of ten should be asleep at this time."

Back came Viti from the bathroom, chattering to himself.

"Look, Miss," he piped. He gave one bound on to the bed, shrieking with laughter. He pushed his feet impatiently inside the bedclothes, threw out the pillow on to the floor, rolled on to his tummy, turned his head on one side, placed one grubby little hand beneath it. His black eyelashes fluttered and fell. Viti was asleep.

Mary went out softly through Luigi's room. He was sitting up in bed reading. He gave her the peculiarly sweet sensual smile that stirred her. She went to her room and brought him back two chocolates. After she had given them to him she wished she had not. She went back and got two more, and laid them by Viti's bed. She had meant to give them all chocolates, of course. Viti would find his in the morning.

Passing through the sitting-room, she said good-night to the Professor. He stood up politely, and then settled down again to his *Purgatorio*, holding the tiny print into the candle-light.

In the passage Giacomo was tying up Ivan for the night.

"How he howls, poor fellow!" he said. And then he

added, for Mary's enlightenment, "They always do at this time of the year, you know."

Mary liked Giacomo. He looked almost like an English boy, with the candle-light showing up his fair hair and blue eyes.

"Do you require anything, Miss?" he asked. In his mother's absence he was the head of the house.

"Nothing, thank you, Giacomo. Good-night."

Mary opened her shutters. There was Brunone undressing in the dim yellow courtyard. A candle was burning in his hut, but he was outside it, letting the soft coolness play about him. With slow, lazy movements he lowered his blue dungarees and pulled the red jersey over his head. Mary knelt down by the window where he could not see her. All that was artist in her rose in admiration of this primitive Calabrian peasant. His shirt looked snow white in the darkness. She saw his great arm go over his head and worry it off him, bending forward from the waist. He drew a stool out into the yard and sat there naked to the waist. Then he threw back his head and laughed, just for the full joy of living. He stretched out his legs and felt them carefully. In the dim shadow Mary could just see his fingers moving, felt rather than saw him scratching his back, his thighs, his arms. Then suddenly he stretched and went into the hut.

In the middle of the night Ivan howled. The noise wakened Mary, and almost immediately afterwards she heard a car pull up somewhere on the road. Then everything was very still. She must have dozed again, and this time it was a light that waked her—a little aura of light, pale chrome yellow with a pin-prick of wavering fire in the centre —a candle. Mary suddenly became wide awake. The dressing-room door was open, and in the doorway stood a man's figure, and she saw that it was her candle that he was holding.

She sat up in bed.

"Who are you? What do you want?" she said in a whisper.

The man's face was white and long and inhuman in the candle-light. He spoke softly in English.

"I am the Marchese. I have come to see my son."

"The Marchese! But the Marchesa is in Naples. Besides, why have you come like this—like a thief?"

"It is seven years since I have seen him," said the man. "I am on my way to Sicily, and I thought—— She has altered the house a good deal—this used to be the hall, I remember. I suppose I shouldn't have come in through the front door at all."

"No, we don't use it. But please go—the children are asleep; and besides—the Marchesa——"

"How many children are there now?" asked the Marchese, placing the candle on the table.

"How many? What do you mean? There are three, of course!"

"So—there is another! And you teach them, mademoiselle?"

He turned his head slowly as padding steps came along the passage.

"Signorina," came Brunone's hoarse voice on the other side of the curtain, "I thought I saw someone come in——"

Mary saw his brown feet under the short curtain illuminated by the candle he carried.

"Yes, it is I, the Master," said the Marchese impatiently. He pulled he curtain back, and from the light of Brunone's candle Mary saw him for a moment clearly—a haggard, finely cut face and strange, restless eyes.

"Signore Marchese!" Brunone was on his knees kissing the long white hand. "Ah, Signore Marchese, to see you

again—to touch you!" He had pulled on brown earth-yellow trousers over his nightshirt; his eyes were bright with sleep and very blue.

Softly the Marchese took his candle from him and held it close to his brown wild face.

"So she has gone at last to the very soil," he mused aloud.

"Is the third one yours, Brunone?" he asked.

"Il bambino?" Sì, Signore Marchese—the Marchesa did me the honour——" He cringed as if for a blow, but when it did not come he laughed.

Softly the door at the end of the passage opened. It was the Professor. His face looked wan and pinched in the shadowy light. He had put on a dressing-gown and slippers hastily, and the cord of the gown trailed behind him like a flail. He came towards the little group, holding his candlestick high and blinking near-sightedly.

"I thought I heard—is anything the matter, mademoiselle?" He clutched his dressing-gown round him. His white young face looked drawn, as if he did not sleep too well at night.

"Why, it is the Professor," said the Marchese, holding his candle aloft. "We are quite a party! And how is *your* son, Professor?" he added ironically. "He was three years old when I last saw him—took after his mother, I remember."

Mary still sat up in bed, too bewildered to move or speak. Was she dreaming that these three men were standing unconcernedly in her candle-lit bedroom in the middle of the night parcelling out the Marchesa's children amongst them? It was incredible, unbelievable!

"Now take me to my son," commanded the Marchese to the two men, picking up his candle. "I have not much time."

They passed out, and Mary, wrapping her kimono round her, followed the strange little procession.

Brunone went first and the Marchese followed, a worn, bent figure, holding his candle high and walking deliberately, as if he were performing some religious rite. It was as well that he did so, for the Professor, who came behind him, had forgotten his. He peered ahead of him, running his hand over his unshaven chin and unruly hair, his carpet slippers, which were too big for him, floundering along the floor.

Brunone held his candle negligently. He was smiling, perhaps at some dream he had had. He was perfectly happy. If the Signore Marchese had not been there he would have hummed a song. Like a lithe panther he walked soundlessly and magnificently, a mighty frame stored with sun and wind, untrampled and unconquered. As they passed through Viti's room he paused and looked at his child. He had many others, but this one, with its white night-clothes, its aristocratic little head, its delicate round baby cheeks—oh, he was proud of this one! He must not own it as his—did not want to own it. If the Signora Marchesa wished one night to come to his hut, he was her peasant; and besides, their bodies had been good together—that was all it was. He took one of Viti's hands in his own immense brown one. It lay there, small and grubby. He bent down and kissed it roughly. "Fine little Signore," he muttered and joined the others.

The Professor too had stopped, and stood gazing down upon the sleeping Luigi. "Mary, Mother of God," Mary heard him murmur, and knew him to be saying a prayer. Perhaps, she thought with surprise, he often prayed for his little boy. Even in sleep Luigi did not lose his mocking expression. Mary hoped very much that those heavy-lidded eyes would not open and rest upon her as she was. She

flushed a little. He's only ten, she thought, and shuddered. She saw the Professor make the sign of the Cross over the sleeping boy. A tear splashed on to the coverlet. For a moment it glittered and then soaked into the cloth. Luigi stirred and threw out an arm. Did he subconsciously feel that tear—a tear, all that could ever pass from strange father to stranger son!

But the Marchese noticed none of these things. He walked stiffly into Giacomo's room and closed the door. He was there for ten minutes, and then he came out quietly and put out his hand to Mary.

"I thank you, mademoiselle," he said. "I am very proud of him. When he is a little older I shall have him with me. Good-bye."

Brunone held his coat for him, and the tutor handed him his grey Homburg hat. The three men passed slowly down the passage. Brunone led the way again with the candle. Mary heard a door opening, a faint hum of voices, the engine of a car on the road.

She went back to her own room. The courtyard lay outside, a ghostly thing of black shapes, and beyond nothingness—a black void. A single star hung over the blackness that was the sea. The muffled sound of the waves was as regular as a heart beat.

STRUTHERS BURT

Entertaining the Islanders[1]

The island of St. Birgitta lies somewhere in the Caribbean Sea. Originally the French had occupied it. They had been driven out twice by the English, who in turn had given way to the Swedes; and now the islands are under American rule, presided over by the Governor, Mr. Gilder, whose belief in the general tend towards immorality in human nature renders him subject to alternate fits of passive depression and frenzied activity.

Mr. Julius Wack is a rich, retired manufacturer of floor-wax who lives on the island during the winter months. Diametrically opposed in temperament to the Governor, he is a cultured hedonist, deriving a gentle, ironical amusement from the very things that torture his Excellency.

Mr. Wack's niece, Anita Fulton, meets David Banastre, the head of an advertising firm in New York. David is weary of the modern illusionary round of life: Anita, anxious to leave her husband, is flying to St. Birgitta, where her uncle, Julius Wack, is residing. David, wandering from island to island in the Caribbean, finally comes to St. Birgitta, wherethe following chapters bring him into contact with Anita once again.

THE *Emma*, a slattern of the seas, a veritable drab of the Caribbean, a slut with rusty steel skirts and a funnel cocked jauntily like a drunkard's hat, plies between certain of the northern islands. The inhabitants are amused by *Emma* and

[1] *Entertaining the Islanders*, by Struthers Burt. Lovat Dickson, 8*s.* 6*d.* net.

regard her with the scornful solicitude with which the more liberal business men of a small community regard the local prostitute. *Emma* is an institution and promotes trade.

With the incongruous characteristics that often distinguish the dissolute, *Emma* has a habit of appearing early in the morning. By night there is no *Emma*, by dawn there she is, leaning up against a quay with the insolent patience of a draggletail who, elbow on bar, awaits the hour when drinks can be served. Horizoned by the translucent dawn of the tropics, *Emma* is a lesson to all younger steamers.

David had taken the *Emma* from Puerto Rico and had bought passage to St. Birgitta for no reasons except that the name pleased him and that he had heard St. Birgitta was nowadays little visited. St. Birgitta seemed just the place where he could settle down to work.

"You won't like it," the shipping clerk in San Juan had said. "There's nothing to do . . . no amusements."

"Thank God!" David had ejaculated.

David escaped to the *Emma* by night with a feeling of release. The *Emma* proved an instant balm. The damp, black breeze of the harbour; the *Emma's* lack of pretension. She was vulgar and knew it. Her humbleness and roughness were not of the finest type, for she had no intention of curing them, but she was aware of her faults, and at this point wisdom begins.

The lights of Morro and San Juan sank like stars. A pressing eager sea took the *Emma* into its arms like a salty sailor hungry for a long-dreamed-of, coarse, familiar body.

He awoke to shouting and struggling, and found his cabin filled with blacks of all ages fighting over his baggage. He leapt among them with an oath. "Get out of here!" he yelled. They paid no attention to him. He flailed about with his arms and kicked with his feet. Instantly the cabin was

empty, but around the corners of the door peered an army with wide, inquiring eyes. David slammed the door and locked it in the army's face. Then he lit a cigarette and went to the porthole.

Perhaps half an hour had elapsed since dawn. On the waters of the harbour and on the green and violet hills lay the cool serene radiance of very early morning. The houses of the citron town, their red roofs showing between tamarinds and palms, were infused with the same radiance. One felt that good people slept gently within them. It was as if something never before tried had begun; as if existence for a moment was experiencing a unity which was its essential, but seldom remembered, fact.

It occurred to David that to some perfect mind, far in the future, all the varying elements would be one; that even now, in brief intervals like this, they were one, and that if only they had sufficient implicitness, the spirit and body, tireless and uplifted, for a little while could move unafraid and prepotent where they willed . . . like a fish in the water, like a bird in the air, like a worm in the dark wonder of the earth, like a god walking. But even then there would be another warring element left. The most unplumbed and unconquerable of all. That region in which man walked by himself, trying to understand himself, and by so doing to understand others, until, by self-understanding, he had opened a door into the mystery beyond.

A few fishing-boats with slack sails drifted toward the open sea. From a row-boat near at hand a small coloured boy, naked except for a tattered pair of white drawers, dived repeatedly. His performance was entirely for his own gratification, for the *Emma* was not a tourist boat and her passengers, for the most part hard-bitten and sardonic islanders and travelling salesmen, did not throw coins to little coloured

boys. The diver's unselfconsciousness added to the innocence of the hour.

An ecstasy of elation such as he had not known for years ran through David's lightly clad body. He stared for a moment longer, then threw his cigarette into the bay and turned about to pack his suitcases.

"There is," said Mr. Wack to Anita, "a most charming young man abroad in this town; I think he must have come in on the *Emma* yesterday. Well, what I mean when I say young is somewhere in the middle thirties." He glanced at the unconcerned profile of his niece and buried his nose in the mint julep she had given him. "Ah!" he said, and placed the glass on the arm of his chair and looked at the sunset. "When you come right down to it, there is nothing quite like a julep, is there? Delicious as a well-made swizzle is, it's a relief at times to drink something else. I congratulate you on not having gone altogether native. Maintain some of your American integrity. Keep on serving juleps.

"How happy I am!" he resumed after a pause. "How lovely the sunset is! That is the way a julep makes you feel, and I have never known why. After all, it's nothing but a little whisky and ice and sugar and mint, but like everything else, you take the universal elements, combine them, and you have an individual soul. You are an exquisite-looking woman, my child."

"Thanks," said Anita drily. "I trust it's not the julep." She continued to study dreamily the bay and the far-off blue rim of the sea, deepening to twilight purple. Like a shred of mist on the horizon was the first of the Birgitines.

"That will be nice," she continued disinterestedly, "for Missy. She was hoping somebody would come in on the

Emma. Nice . . . or bad. I don't trust any one in this climate and isolation."

"He's not Missy's type at all," said Mr. Wack. "He's an intelligent, experienced-looking young man."

"Well—please don't introduce him to me," said Anita shortly.

Mr. Wack was injured.

"I've no intention of introducing him to you, although I've no doubt in the course of events, in a place as small as this, you'll meet him. I'm well aware that you're in no mood to meet young men, although it might do you good." His voice turned mild again and descriptive. "He is of medium height," he said, "and elegantly and gracefully made. He is dark, with dark crisp hair, possibly curly—I couldn't see it under his hat—and a small black moustache—one of those close-cropped moustaches—and he wears a becoming panama and a well-fitting linen suit. His taste in ties, also, seems to be excellent. His cheeks"—Mr. Wack's sentences became slightly sing-song from cataloguing—"are pleasantly bony, his eyes dark and interested, and his nose is somewhat flat, as if at some time it might have been broken. Not exactly a handsome face, but, what is far better, an engaging one. He looks trustworthy in the nicest way—that is, as if he had no morals, but considerable decency. Women don't like morals anyway, they like selective immorality . . . when they're selected . . . and good manners."

Anita was derisive.

"How horribly cynical you are!" She made a sound of distaste with her nose.

"Why do you do that?"

"Your description is so dreadfully vulgar . . . and trite."

"Vulgar?"

"Yes—vulgar, sentimental, and trite, even to the broken

nose; even to the phrase 'not exactly a handsome face, but, what is far better, an engaging one.' How could you? You must have been reading the motion-picture magazines."

"Well—he *has* a broken nose," complained Mr. Wack.

"No doubt—he probably had it broken to add to the interest. He sounds to me like a gunman or a fugitive from justice."

"Many fugitives from justice are very delightful people," said Mr. Wack amiably, "so long as you don't get to know them too well or lend them money; I've met lots of them all over the world. This young man looks like some kind of an artist, possibly a writer of sorts . . . he has that air of abstraction coupled with observation which is supposed to distinguish the writer, but seldom does. Most of the writers I've met are observing only themselves."

David found it hard to think—that is, deeply and consecutively. Painful, like trying to use an unused muscle. With grim surprise he realised he had not thought in the way he now wanted to think since the war. That he had not even wanted to think in this way until the dusk when the Dutch housewife had put out from Brooklyn and left the shining towers of New York behind.

He felt himself a fool and wished passionately to be wise even if, to find wisdom, it were necessary to become stupid again.

He recalled what he had known once . . . in his undergraduate days, perhaps, when he had lacked the material for thought but had brooded over its technique. Thinking was a state of mind; a method of approach, a solvent, a universal tool, a science and an avocation. A habit. You had to get into the habit of thinking.

His mind reacted instantly to ideas and people and scenes,

stabbed in and out like a glistening steel drill, but it penetrated only a surface stratum, and between that and the real ore below was a quicksand layer of inertia. It was so much easier to form brilliant, quick judgments, or to say something amusing.

David's mind annoyed him. He wanted to take it out, and wash it, and dry it, and polish it, and blow upon it, and put it back again. He found it determined to read when it should be thinking; determined to talk when it should be reading. And a great deal of the time it wallowed lazily in a sea of memories over which broke the little lazy waves of the present . . . people walking past, a new acquaintance, the sounds and smells of steamers, the look of the horizon, the last quarrel—or the one before—he had had with Marian; Marian suddenly smiling at him out of a misunderstanding, not because she understood him, or wanted to, but because it was a bore to go on. Marian taking her clothes off. Her breathless whiteness. Or Marian putting her clothes on again. Well, that was all right . . . some of it. To observe was necessary and human. To feel the present and recollect the past was necessary. There were errors on the other side. Too many of the few who realised the value of thought failed to realise that the material of thought was constant sympathetic experience. But recollection and observation should not be merely impressionistic . . . they should be used to form character and opinion and purpose. Unless each recollection was slightly different every time you recollected, your mind was standing still in that particular. It was imperative to think things out to the end.

And good God, you had such a little time in which to think and feel, and that was about all you were here for!

The room in which David found himself after leaving the *Emma* was not monastic, but it had, like many of the inhabi-

tants of monastic rooms, a split personality, a Swedish soul, clean, vigorous, admirably proportioned and sparse, softened and coloured by the picaresqueness of a hundred and fifty years of the tropics. It was like a blond shining northerner who had settled down with a dusky wife. Mixed with the smell of soap and the aroma of old wood and plaster scrupulously cared for, were the faint exciting spiciness of decades of sun and the faint dampness of long heavy rains. In the further corners lay the blue, never-disturbed shadows of hot countries where shadow is a blessing. If you left open the door which gave upon a gallery that looked toward the bay, the trade wind came in perpetually, flapping the curtains, and you heard the crisp rustling of the giant palm in the courtyard.

The walls of the room were of rough plaster painted white, but against one wall was a magnificent mahogany wardrobe, deep-toned and with reflecting depths like a tropic pool, and near this was a delicate mahogany desk. Against the other wall was a mahogany table and a brass bedstead with a gay coverlet and snowy linen. The mosquito netting, tucked back for the day, was whole and new, a sure sign of good housekeeping in the islands. The floor, except for a few rag rugs, was bare and scrubbed down to the grain. Facing the door that opened upon the gallery at the back, and fronting upon the main street, were two long windows with latticed shutters. From these you stepped on to a balcony with a grilled-iron railing. Across from the balcony was the cathedral—a pro-cathedral as David afterwards learned—and as David unpacked he heard a stentorian voice addressing the early morning congregation. Every now and then the congregation sang and the organ pealed.

David went to one of the windows, a hairbrush in one hand, a sponge in the other. He chuckled.

"He's giving them hell!" he said to himself.

He could see into the dim interior of the cathedral. Below him the street was empty and he suddenly remembered that it was Sunday. The street on this side, where the buildings cut off the sun, was cool with the plum-coloured transparency of the hour. It was somewhere around seven o'clock. In the cathedral tall candles made golden nimbi, and grouped near the high altar were black acolytes in scarlet robes, like angels in a heaven suddenly become Moorish. The heads of the congregation, turned away from David, were mostly Moorish, too. Above these heads, like a great white monster of the Apocalypse, radiant in vestments of cloth of gold, shimmering in the haze of the candles, a big white-haired man pounded the rail of the pulpit and spoke thunderingly.

At first David thought he was listening to a foreign tongue, but presently he began to catch words here and there in an accent pleasantly homelike. He turned back into his room and put down his brush and sponge, and resumed his unpacking. Everything so far had been arranged with the passion for regimentation which seizes the traveller when he can at last settle down. Such neatness would not exist again while David was on St. Birgitta. He placed his tooth-paste, his razor and shaving brush, mathematically aligned, upon the marble top of the washstand. He would walk down the gallery now to the bathroom and take a shower . . . marvellous in this cool warm air! Pretty soon Mr. Jorgenson would call him for a second breakfast. Already he had had a dreadful cup of coffee on the *Emma*, served by a zombie.

Mr. Jorgenson was his host, a sparse, active, sunburned man, continuously chuckling, who looked a little like a bulldog; a bachelor, apparently, who had turned his family residence into a *pension*. On the ground floor were his offices. An hour before David had never heard of Mr. Jorgenson, now he felt that he knew him well. Mr. Jorgenson had

already let fall the information that he was agent for most of the steamship lines, consul for practically all of the South American republics, also for Greece, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, the representative of the majority of the leading insurance companies, and the owner of several private enterprises, such as a taxicab company, a canning factory to can turtle soup, and a plantation or two. A charming man, active as a cricket. Having decided to add to his innumerable other duties the care of a *pension*, Mr. Jorgenson met all the boats and selecting those passengers whose looks pleased him, carried them off. David was grateful that his appearance had proved satisfactory. He liked Mr. Jorgenson; his house, his manners, and the room in this house he had selected for David.

"A grand place to begin work!" said David.

"A novel?" said Mr. Jorgenson. Without asking he knew that when David said work he meant a book.

"Well . . . not exactly. A sort of history."

"Breakfast in half an hour on the gallery," said Mr. Jorgenson.

David undressed deliciously and got into a heavy silk bathrobe. This was a country for slow dressing and undressing. The air caressed you like cool absent-minded fingers and your muscles felt strong and rippling. David for the first time in many years thought about his muscles and rather liked them. He had just seen himself in the glass. His body was slim and hard and non-hirsute, and darkly white like his face.

In the cathedral across the street the organ pealed and the congregation began to sing. David knew the hymn from his school days, which had been Episcopalian and not Methodist like his years in college. "Michael Praetorius—1571—1621" . . . he could see the historical note above the music. One of the most beautiful hymns in the world!

" Sing we all now with one accord,
Sing with joy to our mighty Lord,
Our hearts and voices raise
To Christ in hymns of praise."...

" God ! " said David. " I like this place ! "

He decided that before taking his shower he would smoke another cigarette on the balcony. One of the joys of the past three weeks had been this leaning on balconies any time the mood seized him, thinking about nothing. He pulled the cord of his bathrobe tight and stepped out into the morning.

The interior of the cathedral swayed with song and incense and the golden guttering of candles. It was an Aladdin's cave whose richness had no relation to the pastel morning.

" A great institution ! " thought David. " They put on great shows and use their churches familiarly as churches should be used. It's the only church that actually impregnates the lives of those who belong to it. It's tied on to life logically, the way a well-planned formal garden is tied on to a house."

A girl dressed in white had come out of the cathedral and was standing, a white parasol in her hand, at the top of the broad shallow steps. David felt the inevitable quickening of interest. She was a pretty thing, slim and blonde and sparkling. And then David's heart jumped and subsided . . . crept slowly down in the direction of his stomach with amazed reluctance like an eager dog told to retrace his steps upon a stair.

He slid back into his room.

" Hmm ! " he said aloud. " That's complicating ! Young Mrs. Fulton ! "

David took his shower and ate his breakfast soberly. There was no one else on the gallery except the splay-footed black

damsel who served him with the ferocious timidity that all but the more accustomed negroes exhibit everywhere with a new white. Beyond the blue-tiled roofs of the storehouses belonging to the house, storehouses that formed a lane leading to a private wharf, the bay glittered.

David had no illusions about himself, or anyone else, or the period in which he was living. The abandonment of inherited rules, necessary as that abandonment might be, and a step forward, meant, until you found others, that you made your own rules, and most people's were at present confused. One thing alone seemed certain, if once you had held a woman in your arms you had reached with her a degree of intimacy from which it was difficult to step back; unless, that is, she was one of those strange mental harlots who collect embraces. But to the normal woman embraces, such as he and Anita had exchanged, still meant something. You crossed a bridge . . . you entered into a field in which fences were down. Beyond that bridge there was little that could not be said or done with no greater risk than a good-humoured rebuke. There is, besides, no memory stronger than the memory of an embrace, and no action that calls more for reiteration. With such a memory, modern confusion does not stand up against proximity and intimacy.

David felt that a few years earlier—maybe a few months earlier—he would have hailed with delight the so little expected presence of Anita. But not now. His decision that night in New York had been correct for his present mood and purposes. He wanted to work, he wanted to think, he wanted a period of cool loneliness in which to recapture himself and arrange his life. Moreover, he had come to the conclusion that he was mortally sick of women save as friends . . . the whole hot, heady, difficult, time-taking, repetitious business. Marian was enough . . . too much. Perhaps after awhile he

might even try to evade her. Distance brought out the ugly shadows of her portrait, not the more engaging ones.

Nor would this possible adventure be simple. He felt sure of that. This girl was too much of a person. Whatever her intentions toward casualness might be, she was not casual. Nor would he be casual either, not with her. The few hours he had spent with her had convinced him that their personalities in conjunction would require handling.

He pushed his coffee cup away and went to one of the long windows that looked out upon the courtyard and the storehouses and the bay. He smiled grimly at himself. He was a facile prophet, wasn't he? He took a lot for granted. This girl had said that he was spoiled, and he was. Like the tuberculosis specialist who thinks all people have tuberculosis, numerous mature men begin to overlook the fact that there are women, indeed the vast majority, who prefer chastity or faithfulness. The specialist sees only those who need him, and he gets to recognise these instinctively, and is not interested in the others. Furthermore, for all he knew this girl might now despise him. Often women, despising themselves, transferred the belittlement to the man. . . . No, she was too fair-minded for that. But even if at the moment the intentions on both sides were of the best, the situation would still be dangerous.

He would have to get out! Find another island! Flight was the only solution. It was too bad. He didn't want to leave; none the less, he would have to get out. He reflected. But there was no boat for eight days! Eight days . . . that was disarranging. Well, he could keep out of sight. St. Birgitta was a small place, but by maintaining a sharp look-out on the street, and by working hard, and by taking long walks in the country he could manage to keep hidden . . . at least, until it was so late that if he and Anita did run

into each other they would have no time except for a hurried greeting.

His firmness relieved him. He drew a pipe out of his pocket and filled it thoughtfully, and after lighting it, looked again at the bay. He was experiencing now a small regret. This girl was lovely—charming; he remembered her laugh, her slow questioning voice, sometimes quick and gay, the smell of her hair. Also he felt curiously ashamed of his newly acquired power of cool, naked, almost indecent analysis. It took the bloom off life. None of the sudden crimson blurring that for awhile, anyhow, made almost anything assume the aspect of nobility. Well, he supposed truth was always naked and somewhat indecent, and the process of growing up was never pleasant. . . . And only a little while before his blood would have quickened at the thought of possible adventure!

Deep down in himself he had long ago recognised the vestiges of a romantic tradition, and to this tradition only starkness is immoral. You could sleep with women, but you mustn't admit, even to yourself, that they are sleepable. It was the exact reverse of the Puritan tradition.

He breathed through his nose with amused disgust. "You poor damned fool! You're neither fowl, flesh nor good red herring!"

Men love habit, whether it be the habit of disconnectedness or of order, of adventure or security. David loved his days and nights. You awaken early in the tropics. David found himself getting up each morning around seven o'clock and putting on a dressing-gown, and going out on to the balcony to smoke, but now instead of not thinking, he thought a great deal . . . about his book, about himself, about St. Birgitta . . . in a lovely pellucid sort of way as if he were

floating on his back in water. Afterwards he would go into the cool shadows of the bathroom and take a long shower, with the trade wind blowing in through the narrow window and the tall palm rustling outside.

" I'm getting sensuous again like a child," he told himself with mild amusement. But there was an entirely new field of quiet, constant excitement to be found in details and the slow savouring of them.

In the mornings he worked, his past training enabling him to discover at once what all professional writers know, but few amateur writers, restless with egotism and laziness and old inherited foolish tales of inspiration, are willing to admit, and that is, that if you sit long enough before a desk something is almost bound to happen. Man spins inspiration out of himself as he spins everything else. An inexhaustible spider; ugly, absurd, often spinning beauty. It is the impatience of his patience that produces the web, but to start the web he must learn to sit quietly and lurking. He must learn to return again and again to one spot.

In the afternoons, David read for a couple of hours and then walked along the coast or through the hills toward the Cul de Sac, stopping in at St. Peter, Fisherman, or the overly green graveyard, on his way back. He saw no one but Mr. Jorgenson, but Mr. Jorgenson was enough. Mr. Jorgenson, coming and going, and apparently never resting, hardly ever passed without telling David something of interest about St. Birgitta.

" My object," he said, " as perhaps you have suspected, is to prevent you from leaving next week."

David smiled ruefully.

He hated the thought of leaving, St. Birgitta suited him so well.

" I'm afraid that can't be helped."

"Oh, yes, it can." Mr. Jorgenson was cheerful and confident. "Who can predict the future? I had three cousins preparing to be nuns in Martinique, and the next morning Pelée erupted. . . . There's a launch at the end of the wharf which is yours any time you like. Can you run a power boat?"

"Yes—thank you."

Mr. Jorgenson hurried down the gallery toward the kitchen.

"Look here!"

Mr. Jorgenson turned about.

"Are there any good walks toward the south?"

"Oh, yes! . . . it's a fine open country. There's an especially nice walk to a little beach called Diabelar, facing St. Hildegard. Ten miles there and back." Mr. Jorgenson wrinkled his nose. "Why do you always write and read and walk? You are young. We have a society. . . . I must introduce you to it."

David shut and opened his mouth fiercely.

"Don't you dare!"

Mr. Jorgenson shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, just a few . . . a few carefully selected individuals? Umm? What about that? Young men say they hate company, but they don't really."

. . . There were West Indian chairs on the gallery with immensely prolonged broad arms so that you could put your legs up, spread apart. These were meant primarily for siestas or for sleeping on extra hot nights, but David used them for reading.

He put down Marcel Proust, wondering as he always did why in God's name he read Marcel Proust, but convinced that he was great, and that a certain amount, at times, of dogged dullness was a concomitant of any sort of final greatness, and going into his room for his hat and coat, returned along the

gallery and descended the stone outside stairs to the court-yard. On the floor below, in the arachnid recesses of his office, Mr. Jorgenson kept a clerk like a bewildered fly. A thin, nervous, skittish, tea-coloured clerk, with huge startled brown eyes and curly hair standing straight up from his head, who wrote continuously in huge ledgers and never by any chance remembered David's name.

David felt that in some obscure way he frightened this clerk.

He accepted calmly the crisis, because by now he was used to it, which his demand for mail occasioned, and putting the two letters given him into his pocket, struck out toward the south . . . along the main street of St. Birgitta, and past the square of the Swedish king, and up over the promontory that formed on this side the curve of the halberd-like harbour.

Beyond the promontory the country fell away to a broad little valley bounded on the left by hills and on the right by rolling forested slopes that hid the line of the coast. The little valley was surprisingly like England of the southern shires or New Hampshire. You left the tropics behind and strode into something that was neat and hardy and carefully defined. At a distance the log-woods and acacias, and other trees of the dried areas, and an occasional Spanish oak, could easily be mistaken for apple trees, and behind crumbling walls of loose stones, or hedges of West Indian plum or turpentine trees, sleek cows in meadows raised their heads and looked at the passer-by. Here and there on distant rises were a few small square country houses, white and red and Swedish-looking. The silence was complete. Nothing moved except every now and then a leisurely cow, for here even the trade wind was shut out.

David, with that perversity of the human mind which seeks the strangeness of other countries only to find delight in recognising the familiar, walked briskly along the winding

road, pleased as if he had been walking through a northern autumn. Presently the road ascended toward a barrier elevation to the south and cut through a low pass, and came out once more into a view of the sea.

David paused . . . the transition had been so sudden; breath-taking.

Below him the road swooped sharply down a mile or so to the straits, and where before had been immobility and faint mauves and greens and greys, were motion and prismatic colour. The cobalt blue of sparkling water; the vivid green of sea grapes along the shore; the pure white of beaches; the dark green of the small uninhabited islands that dotted the channel. Five miles or so away the wooded heights of St. Hildegard rose into a cloudless sky. Again the trade wind brushed David's face like the wet leaves of an endless thicket.

He was filled with an elation of sun, and wind, and loneliness, and distance, and cool colour. He looked at his wrist watch. It was four o'clock. "I'll have a swim," he said to himself. "There's not a soul in sight."

He set off down the road.

The thick growth near the shore came up to meet him and soon he was walking along a sandy track between high bushes that shut off his view. The track curved.

"Damn!" he said disgustedly.

Blocking the road was a shining new roadster.

David investigated. On the seat were a doll, a brown tweed coat, and a folded copy of a metropolitan newspaper.

No swimming now!

New Yorkers probably! That was always the way when the moment was perfect . . . the wind changed, or you ran into New Yorkers.

He wondered if by any chance this could be the Fulton girl. She had a child. If it were the Fulton girl, he would have to

hurry home lest he be overtaken. Two more days and he would be off on a steamer to Barbadoes and there would be no further danger. But the thought that maybe it was the Fulton girl stirred his curiosity.

Very gingerly he walked the remaining few yards to the beach and paused where the sea grapes still hid him. The beach curved and he could see its length except immediately on either side of him. His heart leaped and he felt the blood sweep up into his neck and face. . . .

The shallow water in the foreground was a cloudy green. Beyond a coral reef, the cobalt blue began. Except for the trade wind and the dancing of little waves on the farther side of the reef, the afternoon seemed caught up into motionless lustre like the carven lucidity of some far-off forgotten afternoon of sun and sea on an Attic beach. And what David saw added to this impression. . . . Running along the beach, the sun shining on their hair, laughter on their faces, were a shining golden young woman and a little girl. They were naked. Like David they must have thought themselves miles from observation. They ran fearlessly and like unhunted deer. Suddenly the golden young woman turned, the child following her, and plunged into the sea, throwing water up on either side of her with cupped hands. It fell about her in crystal drops like the summit of a fountain. The cloudy green rose slowly over her strong young whiteness; the curve of her hips, the intake of her waist, the square pallor of her shoulders.

David laughed shortly, and joyously, and unconsciously, and then he felt the blood surge up again into his neck and face, and as if a goat had parted the sea grapes and was peering at him, there awoke slyly in his mind the old indecency of Actæon. His impulse was to creep into the bushes where he would be entirely hidden. But another impulse, equally

strong—and equally fabricated—arose to meet the first. Damn the goat! decent men didn't do that sort of thing. David felt slightly sweaty, torn between distaste with himself and a desire to remain where he was.

He spun on his heel and hurried back along the road. As he passed the shining roadster he had for it an odd feeling of intimacy, as if now he knew its occupants well.

He reached the brow of the hill and strode down into the broad little valley. . . . He knew that at the back of his head for a long time, perhaps for good, would be the quite unphilosophical figure of a naked girl.

David reached the *pension* of Mr. Jorgenson at six o'clock. The gallery was dark except for shaded electric lamps at each end. As he came up from the courtyard on the outside stairs, a dapper figure, pongee clad, with white, carefully brushed hair, *en brosse*, rose to meet him, a sun helmet and a stick caught in the crook of its left arm.

"Damn Jorgenson!" said David to himself.

"How d'you do?" said the figure, holding out its hand. "This is Mr. Banastre?"

David could not be rude to cordial people; even cordial people whom he had learned to hate.

"Yes," he said smiling.

"I'm Julius Wack."

David gasped mentally.

"Your friend Jorgenson told me you were here. I waited in the hope that perhaps you'd come up to my house for a swizzle or a cocktail. One welcomes the right sort of stranger, and I live alone."

David hesitated. He rather needed company himself. His walk and his thoughts had made him lonely. He felt again the sudden relish, the sense of an aureole, that dusk and the

thought of a drink, and the thought of gaiety, had always given him. He decided that it wasn't in his nature to be a perpetual hermit . . . and then, this funny little man looked pleasant and amusing. Besides, he was leaving in two days. It was safe enough.

"Why . . . thanks," he said. "Yes."

"Good! My car is outside." Mr. Wack started toward the stairs. "Perhaps my niece will be there. She usually turns up at this hour."

David lost a step.

"My niece, Anita Fulton." Mr. Wack paused to let David pass. "Mrs. Fulton. A most charming person, if I do say so myself. I don't suppose by any chance you've met her? Lots of people have."

"Why, yes," said David. "Yes—I've met her."

"You have?" Mr. Wack's face expressed the joy of a discovery. "Why didn't you let us know?"

David felt trapped. He lied.

"I hadn't the slightest idea that she was on the island. And then, she'd barely remember me. . . . I only met her once—at an evening party."

"Well, it's charming, anyway," said Mr. Wack, "isn't it?"

He led David down to the car that was standing in the dusk before the front entrance to Mr. Jorgenson's office.

"Home," he said to his black driver.

He sank back upon the cushions with a sigh. "I've had a most fatiguing day," he said. "I'll be thankful for a swizzle. I spent the afternoon with the Governor. You haven't met the Governor? . . . No?" He chuckled. "Well, you must meet him. Yes, you'll have to meet him. He explains what's wrong with our present financial system, and the government, and the Tory point of view, and religion, and the relationship between men and women, and . . . oh, lots of things. It's

quite fascinating. Like one of those big coloured paper charts of the human figure in which you lift up flap after flap until you get past the viscera and down to the backbone. Yes, you'll have to meet the Governor."

He was silent for a moment, staring straight ahead of him at the lighted arc of the street as if he were contemplating the Governor's viscera and backbone.

"Figuratively," he resumed, "the Governor believes that you can cure cancers by talcum powder. It's still, even in this enlightened age, quite a common point of view. Quite common. His philosophy is one of interdict, injunction, denial and refusal. This afternoon he took me down to the Botanical Gardens and hinted that it would be nice if I'd give him some money to clean up a corner of swamp down there that's been left. Perhaps you've seen it. He says it makes him shudder, and that he's sure it's unhealthy, and that it isn't neat, and that he thinks it a bad influence. It's one of his obsessions, and about once every three months he gets going on it. Of course it's merely a symbol, although he doesn't know it, and afterwards I'm always in for an hour or so of a jeremiad about the evils of to-day, and the bad manners and sins of the young, and the insolence and laziness of the working-man, and the hopelessness of human nature. He's all for rugged individualism, whatever that may mean." Mr. Wack sighed. "Such talk wearies my head and makes my throat dry. And there's no answer, you know. None at all. You just have to sit and take it. You can't convince people like that. You can't even start. There's so much preliminary work that would have to be done—if it could be done. They won't even admit, whatever one may think, that certain conditions exist—that they're here, so you had best meet them on that basis."

He paused abruptly.

"I trust you are not a Tory, Mr. Banastre?" he asked anxiously. "I am not always tactful; I——"

"Good God, no!" said David. "Go ahead!"

Mr. Wack's voice became slightly complaining.

"I get bottled up after an afternoon with the Governor, and I rather like that patch of swamp myself. It shows you, for one thing, what a terrific tyrant nature can be unless you use your brains, and that's what we all need to be shown. Also, it makes you humble, but at the same time proud . . . yes, it makes you proud that we've been able to exist at all on such an unfriendly planet."

He contemplated this statement, his chin almost touching his hands, crossed on the curved handle of his cane.

"There are three ways," he said finally, and solemnly, "of regarding nature—man—whatever you choose to call it. Three ways. You can seek to repress nature and pretend that it isn't there save in those aspects which please you—that's the Governor's point of view, the Protestant point of view; or you can just turn it loose and let it throttle you—that's the point of view of the West Indian blacks, if you can call it a point of view; or you can study it and examine it, and seek to control it, sympathetically, sensibly and beautifully, with a happy medium between liberty and discipline, for the greater glory of man, not God. I've always felt that if there is a God he can take care of himself in that respect, and that he would be considerably more pleased with a robust and joyous and wise human being than with the majority of specimens he now has to contemplate. But the last method, of course, has never been tried on any scale except by the Greeks and then it was a class matter and based on slavery. No, it wasn't even really tried in the Renaissance. I think, however, I perceive nowadays faint signs of a general com-

pulsion toward that point of view." He interrupted himself again.

"You like this sort of talk, Mr. Banastre?"

David laughed.

"It's the only sort of talk worth while in my opinion . . . except two others."

"And what are those?"

"Personal experiences—when you have good tale-tellers, and the talk—mostly unspoken—between people in love with each other. Otherwise—I wish people would keep quiet."

Mr. Wack chuckled appreciatively.

"That's nice! Nice that you feel that way! I hope we can see something of each other during your stay down here. But then I thought from seeing you on the street the other day that you were that sort of person, perhaps that's why I looked you up. A good many of our present-day intellectuals don't agree with us, do they? They scorn anything approaching metaphysics. Call it tripe, I think, or something like that. But, after all, what else has been man's mainstay through the ages, and what else offers him any future chance? . . . You read the latest school of fiction?"

"When I get a chance."

Mr. Wack sighed, but this time lugubriously.

"Very able, but childish. First-class artists—some of them—but not the final greatness. A pity!"

He was silent again; this time for a longer interval. Finally he spoke reflectively.

"You think a lot about nature down here," he said. "You have to."

The courtyard was lit by wrought-iron lamps, rising from the corners of the walls, and near one of these, under the fig trees, was a table spread with tea things. As David and Mr.

Wack entered the courtyard from the house, Anita, lying in a long wicker chair, turned her head and looked at them. Then she got to her feet.

The tropic night was soundless, or so it seemed to David.

" Well," said Mr. Wack cheerily, " I've brought your gunman. . . . I must explain," he added hastily to David. " You see, I told Anita that there was a personable stranger in town and she suggested that you might be a fugitive from justice. Of course, she had no idea who you were, gunmen dress so nicely nowadays."

" Perhaps I am," said David.

Anita was still looking at him.

He walked across the courtyard wondering what she would say.

" And what are you doing down here ? " she demanded. " You're the last person in the world I expected to see."

" And you . . . you're the last person I expected to see. I'm writing a book."

He took her hand. He noticed the slim, strong bones of her fingers. Up to that moment he had felt casual and a trifle amused, but suddenly the still night seemed to strike him dumb. The still night and this little circle of soft radiance in which they stood. He remembered the scene in Wagner's " Der Fliegende Holländer " where the haunted man comes home and meets the woman he loves and for a moment there is no sound but the intervaled beat of a drum.

" This is a heavenly place, isn't it ? " he said stupidly.

" It's nice you know each other," said Mr. Wack.

[*To be continued in the August number*]

Our Contributors

HELEN SIMPSON was born in Australia and educated at Oxford. During the War she served with the W.R.N.S. as a decoding officer at the Admiralty. Among her successful novels have been *Boomerang*, which was awarded the James Tait Black Prize, and *The Woman on the Beast*, which was the Book Society choice last September. She has made an extensive study of witchcraft, and possesses a large collection of books on the subject. Another art on which she is an authority is that of Cookery; and she is in much demand as a broadcaster.

ADAM MARTIN DE HEGEDUS is 27, and a Hungarian. Could speak no English till he was 20. He studied law and took the degree of LL.D. in Hungary, but never practised. In 1929 he became London correspondent of a Hungarian newspaper, and has written several essays on English literature, and broadcast a number of talks on English life. He is a critical contributor to *The Observer*. His favourite writers, whose books, in his opinion, any young author must read, are: Swift, Hazlitt, Somerset Maugham, Rosamund Lehmann and Rebecca West.

NEIL BELL was born forty years ago at Southwold, Suffolk, where his people had been boatbuilders for three hundred years. Apprenticed as a shipwright he became in turn a schoolmaster and a journalist. First contributed verse and prose to *The English Review* under Austin Harrison's editorship. During the War served four years in the ranks and after some years in London went to live in a small cottage in Cornwall, where he remained three very lean years, writing, fishing and poaching for means of subsistence. Married there and moved to North Devon, where he wrote his first novel, *The Seventh Bowl*, under the pseudonym "Miles."

This was a failure, but his next novel, *Precious Porcelain*, did well, and he has since written a number of others, of which *Bredon and Sons* is his latest. Now lives in Kent and has three children. He thinks Conrad's *Gaspar Ruiz* the greatest short story he has ever read.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL, the youngest of our contributors, came down from Oxford three years ago. While an undergraduate he edited the *Oxford Outlook*. He has published a number of short stories and two novels. Of his last, *About Levy*, Mr. Harold Nicolson wrote: "I should be surprised if within ten years he did not stand in the very forefront of contemporary fiction." Mr. Calder-Marshall has been a schoolmaster.

FRANCIS WATSON was born and brought up in Yorkshire, but has not allowed that spacious county to make him a " regional " writer. At the age of twenty-five he launched his first novel, *Trinc !*, with a successful splash and followed it to London, where he repayed his debt to the inspirer of *Trinc !* by writing a life of Rabelais under the title of *Laughter for Pluto*. Then came a second novel, *Wonder Malady*, and a third is expected in the autumn. His critical contributions have dealt with such various work as that of Goethe, James Joyce, André Maurois, Omar Khayyám, Walther von der Vogelweide, Spinoza, Defoe and the Surréalistes.

KATHLEEN SWINSTEAD-SMITH was born in London and knows it well, having lived in Chelsea, Soho, Bloomsbury and the East End. She has travelled extensively and has lived in Southern Italy for some time, so that the background of her story *The Marchesa* is very familiar to her. Among her other interests is the Theatre; and she has produced several plays. She has only lately started to write short stories.

MAXWELL STRUTHERS BURT received his degree from Princetown University in 1904 and later studied at Merton College, Oxford.

He began his writing career as a reporter on the *Philadelphia Times*, and shortly afterwards removed to Princetown as an instructor in English.

In 1908 he became interested in the cattle business in Wyoming, where he generally lives throughout the summer. During the World War he served in the U.S. Air Force. Of recent years he has devoted his time to writing, spending his winters in North Carolina, and his summers on his ranch. His first book, *In the High Hills*, was published in 1914, and precluded a long line of successes, culminating in *Festival*, the choice of the Book Society in 1931.

His wife, Katherine Newlin Burt, is also a writer of established reputation.